

CORPUS  
SCRIPTORUM CHRISTIANORUM ORIENTALIIUM

EDITUM CONSILIO

UNIVERSITATIS CATHOLICAE AMERICAE  
ET UNIVERSITATIS CATHOLICAE LOVANIENSIS

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Vol. 266

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SUBSIDIA

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HISTORY  
of the  
SCHOOL OF NISIBIS

by

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Libre des Sciences et des Lettres

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LOUVAIN  
SECRÉTARIAT DU CORPUSCO  
49, CH. DE WAVRE  
1965

fondé en 1903 par J.-B. CHABOT († 1948) et H. HYVERNAT († 1941)

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## PREFACE

History of spiritual and intellectual culture, more adequately expressed by the French *Histoire spirituelle* and the German *Geistesgeschichte*, is an area of research with special charm. The enrichment and the gifts Christendom has provided for life have always been a source of particular fascination to me.

For Byzantine and Western Christianity this important area has found many an exponent. Scholars have put many profitable and several excellent works at our disposal. Contrary to this interest there is a complete gap with respect to Eastern Christianity, particularly the Syrian Orient. This, indeed, is very serious lack, seen from the angle of historical research, in fact, an intolerable one. This onesided orientation that has dominated the field has hindered us from seeing a wider perspective and grasping the fulness of the phenomenon of Christianity in thought and action and its rôle in the history of mankind.

The present work is the first instalment among other undertakings in preparation whose purpose is the eventual closing of this intolerable gap in our knowledge.

This study is devoted to the history of an institution which was extraordinary in every respect and spread the fame of Nisibis far and wide. The traveller, who walks among the ruins of this ancient place and searches for the vestiges of the past, is deeply distressed and saddened and even experiences acute pain, because of the fate of Christianity in these places. Still, the ruins conjure up the past in its richness and renown which the School of Nisibis brought to it by planting here the torch of learning, and which became the nerve-center of the intellectual life of the East Syrians and spread its sparks far beyond the confines of East Syrian Christianity. As such this center of learning evokes deep admiration.

I am filled with sentiments of gratitude that I have been permitted to materialize a vision which captured me long ago. I am very grateful that finally a work which has demanded so much time and labor is ready to go from my hands. Everything possible has been done to uncover new manuscript evidence. Patient search

for codices led me repeatedly on long journeys, even to remote areas where the manuscripts have found their hiding-places.

It remains for me to express my deep sense of gratitude to persons and institutions to whom I owe so much. I must abstain from naming all the persons and places which deserve to be mentioned since this alone would require several pages. With a warm heart I think of all those in the libraries, monasteries and churches in Europe and the Orient, who have opened their manuscript treasures to me. The memory of the courtesy, kindness, hospitality and generosity that was extended to me in these places will stay with me as long as I live.

That it was possible to carry out my manuscript research and complete this volume, I owe to the American Council of Learned Societies. I express my profound gratitude for all the magnanimous assistance for the promotion of research in this neglected area. What this really means to my research can never be adequately expressed in words.

I feel deeply honored that this work has been included in the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, a series which enjoys highest scholarly reputation and fame. Herewith I express to its editor Prof. Dr. R. Draguet, who amiably has shared with me the burden of proofreading, my cordial gratitude. For all the kindness and warmth I have received from him I am profoundly grateful.

I also want to extend a warm word of thanks to Prof. W. Freitag, S.T.M., for the care with which he has checked the English of my manuscript, and to Mr. E. Buck, S.T.M., who has shared with me the burden of proofreading and checking the text in its final form.

November 1965.

A. VÖÖBUS.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB = *Analecta Bollandiana*. Bruxelles.

ABĀ, *Définitions et règles* = ABĀ, *Les définitions et règles*, ed. J. B. CHABOT, in *Synodicon orientale*.

ABĀ, *Lettre I-V* = ABĀ *Les Lettres I-V*, ed. J. B. CHABOT, in *Synodicon orientale*.

ABĀ, *Pragmatique des réformes* = ABĀ, *Pragmatique des réformes*, ed. J. B. CHABOT, in *Synodicon orientale*.

'ABDĪŠŌ', *Enumeratio librorum* = EBEDIESU, *Enumeratio librorum omnium ecclesiasticorum*, ed. J. S. ASSEMANI, in *Bibliotheca orientalis* III, 1.

'ABDĪŠŌ', *Enumeratio librorum eccl.* = 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Enumeratio librorum omnium ecclesiasticorum*, ed. A. VÖÖBUS, in CSCOSub (in preparation).

'ABDĪŠŌ', *Nomocanon* = EBEDIESU, *Nomocanon*, ed. A. ASSEMANI, in SVNC X, Romae 1838.

AbhGWG = *Abhandlungen der k. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*. Göttingen.

AbhKM = *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*. Leipzig.

AbhPAW = *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Berlin.

ABRAHAM OF KAŠKAR, *Qānūnē* = ABRAHAM OF KAŠKAR, *Qānūnē*, ed. A. VÖÖBUS, in *Syriac and Arabic Documents*.

ABRAMOWSKI, *Theologischer Nachlass des Diodor* = ABRAMOWSKI, R., *Der theologische Nachlass des Diodor von Tarsus*, in ZntW XLII (1949).

ABRAMOWSKI, *Unbekanntes Zitat* = ABRAMOWSKI, L., *Ein unbekanntes Zitat aus Contra Eunomium des Theodor von Mopsuestia*, in Mus LXXI (1958).

ABŪ 'L-BARAKĀT, *Miṣbaḥ az-ẓilma* = ABŪ 'L-BARAKĀT, *Miṣbaḥ az-ẓilma*. *Der Katalog der christlichen Schriften in arabischer Sprache*, ed. W. RIEDEL, in NchGWG. Göttingen 1902.

*Acta conciliorum oec.* = *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum iussu atque mandato Societatis scientiarum argentoratensis*, ed. E. SCHWARTZ. Berolini et Lipsiae 1914ff.

*Acta martyrum* = *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, ed. P. BEDJAN, I-VII. Parisiis 1890-97.

*Acta sanctorum* = *Acta sanctorum*. Bruxellis.

ADRIANOS, *Isagoge* = ADRIANOS, *Isagoge*, ed. J.P. MIGNE, in PG XCVIII.

AGATHIAS, *Historia* = AGATHIAS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historiarum libri quinque*, ed. J. P. MIGNE, in PG LXXXVIII.

*Akten Ephes. Synode* = *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449 syrisch*, ed. J. FLEMMING, in AbhGWG NF XV. Berlin 1917.

ALDHELM, *De metris* = ALDHELM, *De metris*, in MonGH, Auct. antiquissimi XIV.

AMR, *De patriarchis* = AMR, *De patriarchis nestorianorum commentaria*, ed. H. GISMONDI, Romae 1896.

*Analecta syriaca* = *Analecta syriaca*, ed. P. de LAGARDE. Lipsiae 1858.

ANDREAS, *Epistola* = ANDREAS Samosetanus, *Epistola*, ed. J. P. MIGNE, in PG LXXXIV.

*Anecdota syriaca* = *Anecdota syriaca*, ed. I.P.N. LAND, I-IV. Lugduni Batavorum 1862-75.

AnecO = *Anecdota Oxoniensia*. Semitic Series. Oxford.

ANIS = *Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien*. Hamburg.

- APHRAHAṬ, *Demonstrationes* = APHRAHAṬ, *Demonstrationes*, ed. I. PARISOT, in PS I, 1-2. Parisiis 1894-1907.
- ARISTOTELES, *Organon* = ARISTOTELES, *Organon*, ed. I. BEKKER. Oxonii 1837.
- ARISTOTELES, *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* = BAUMSTARK, A., *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*, in ZfA XIII (1898).
- ARMALET, *Catalogue* = ARMALET, I., *Catalogue des manuscrits de Charfet*. Jounieh 1936.
- ASSEMANI, *Bibliotheca orientalis* = ASSEMANI, J. S., *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino-Vaticana, in qua manuscriptos codices syriacos recensuit*, I-III. Romae 1719-1728.
- ASSEMANI, *Catalogus* = ASSEMANI, S. E., et ASSEMANI, J. S., *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae codium manuscriptorum catalogus*, II-III. Romae 1758-59.
- ASSFALG, *Syrische Handschriften* = ASSFALG, J., *Syrische Handschriften*, VdOHD V. Wiesbaden 1863.
- BĀBAI, *Euagrius Ponticus* = BĀBAI, *Euagrius Ponticus*, ed. W. FRANKENBERG, in AbbGWG NF XIII, 2. Berlin 1912.
- BĀBAI, *Liber de unione* = BĀBAI, *Liber de unione*, ed. A. VASCHALDE, in SCSO scr. syri II, 61. Parisiis 1915.
- BĀBAI, *Sahdūtā de-Kristīnā*, = BĀBAI, *Sahdūtā de-Kristīnā*, ed. P. BEDJAN, in *Acta martyrum* IV. Paris 1894.
- BĀBAI, *Taš'itā de-Giwargis* = BĀBAI, *Taš'itā de-Mār Giwargis*, ed. P. BEDJAN, in *Histoire de Mar-Jabalaha, de trois autres patriarches, d'un prêtre et de deux laïques, nestoriens*. Paris 1895.
- BAĻ'AMĪ, *Chronique* = BAĻ'AMĪ, *Chronique de Tabari traduite sur la version persane*, ed. H. ZOTENBERG, I-IV. Paris 1867-74.
- BAR BAHLUL, *Lexicon syriacum* = BAR BAHLUL, *Lexicon syriacum*, ed. R. DUVAL, I-III. Paris 1901.
- BARDENHEWER, *Geschichte altk. Literatur* = BARDENHEWER, O., *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, I-V. Freiburg i.B. 1913-32.
- BARDY, *Églises de Perse* = BARDY, G., *Les églises de Perse et d'Arménie au Ve siècle*, in FLICHE et MARTIN, *Histoire de l'Église* IV.
- BAR 'EBRĀIĀ, *Chronicon eccl.* = *Gregorii Barhebraei chronicon ecclesiasticum*, ed. J. B. ABBELOOS et T. J. LAMY, I-III. Parisiis-Lovanii 1872-77.
- BAR 'EBRĀIĀ, *Chronicon syriacum* = *Gregorii Barhebraei chronicon syriacum* ed. P. J. BRUNS et G. G. KIRSCH, I-II. Lipsiae 1879.
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- BAUMSTARK, *Griechische und hebräische Bibelzitate* = BAUMSTARK, *Griechische und hebräische Bibelzitate in der Pentateucherklärung Išo'dads von Merw*, in OC XI(1911).
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- Bi = *Biblica*. Roma.
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- BRAUN, *Buch der Synhados* = BRAUN, O., *Das Buch der Synhados nach einer Handschrift des Museo Borgiano*. Stuttgart u. Wien 1900.
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- BZatW = *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*. Giessen-Berlin.
- CASSIODORUS, *Institutiones* = CASSIODORUS, *Institutiones divinarum et humanarum lectionum*, ed. J. P. MIGNE, in PL LXIX.
- Catalogus catholicorum* = *Catalogus catholicorum*, ed. I. GUIDI, in RendRAL (1886).
- CBU = *Contributions of the Baltic University*. Hamburg-Pinneberg.
- CERSOY, *Manuscripts orientaux* = CERSOY, P., *Les manuscrits orientaux de Mg. DAVID au Musée Borgia de Rome*, in ZfA IX (1894).
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- COIP = *The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Publications*. Bombay.
- Conciliorum oec. collectio* = *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. J. D. MANSI, Florentiae 1759ff.
- CONNOLLY, *Liturgical Homilies* = CONNOLLY, R. H., *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, in TaS VIII, 1. Cambridge 1919.
- COSMAS, *Topographia christiana* = COSMAS INDIOPLEUSTES, *Topographia christiana*, ed. J. P. MIGNE, in PG LXXXVIII.
- CSCO = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. Parisiis-Lovani.
- CSCOSub = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Subsidia*. Lovanii.
- CSHB = *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*. Bonnae.
- DADIŠŌ', *Qānūnē* = DADIŠŌ', *Qānūnē*, ed. A. VÖÖBUS, in *Syriac and Arabic Documents*.
- DAL = *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*. Paris.
- De Jacobo* = *De S. Jacobo, episcopo Sarugensi in Mesopotamia*, in *Acta Sanctorum* III, 2. Parisiis et Romae 1867.
- DELISLE, *Cabinet des manuscrits* = DELISLE, L.V., *Cabinet des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque impériale*, I-III. Paris 1868-1881.
- DEVREESSE, *Essai sur Théodore* = DEVREESSE, R., *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*, in SeT CXXI. Città del Vaticano 1948.
- DHGE = *Dictionnaire de l'histoire et géographie ecclésiastique*. Paris.
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EI = *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden.

ELIĀ BAR SĪNĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum* = ELIAS NISIBENUS, *Opus chronologicum*, ed.

E. W. BROOKS et J. B. CHABOT, in CSCO scr. syri III, 7-8. Parisiis 1909-10.

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EPHRĒM, *Carmina Nisibena* = *Des hl. Ephraem des Syrsers Carmina Nisibena*, ed. E. BECK in CSCO 218, 240/Syr.92, 102. Louvain 1961, 1963.

EPHRĒM, *Contra haereses* = *Des hl. Ephraem des Syrsers Hymnen contra haereses* ed. E. BECK, in CSCO 169/Syr.76. Louvain 1957.

EPHRĒM, *De virginitate* = *Hymni de virginitate*, ed. I. E. RAHMANI, I-II. Scharfeh 1907(?).

EPHRĒM, *Discourse to Hypatius* = *Ephraim's Discourse to Hypatius*, ed. W. C. MITCHELL, in *Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*, I-II. London 1912-21.

EPHRĒM, *In Genesim* = *Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum commentaria*, ed. R. TONNEAU, in CSCO 152/Syr.71. Louvain 1955.

EPHRĒM, *Hymni de ecclesia* = *Ephraemi Syri Hymni de ecclesia*, ed. T. J. LAMY, in *Ephraemi Syri Hymni et sermones*, I-IV. Mechliniae 1882-1902.

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EPHRĒM, *Sermones de fide* = *Des hl. Ephraem des Syrsers Sermones de fide*, ed. E. BECK, in CSCO 212/Syr.88. Louvain 1961.

EUAGRIOS, *Historia eccl.* = *Evagrii Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. J. BIDEZ et L. PARMENTIER. London 1898.

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FACUNDUS, *Pro defensione* = FACUNDUS HERMIANENSIS, *Pro defensione trium capitulorum concilii Chalcedonensis*, ed. J. P. MIGNÉ, in PL LXVII.

FLEY, *Diptyques nestoriens* = FLEY, J.M., *Diptyques nestoriens du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in AB LXXXI (1963).

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GEORGIUS, *Descriptio orbis Romani* = GEORGIUS CYPRIUS, *Descriptio orbis Romani*, ed. H. GELZER. Lipsiae 1890.

GGA = *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, Göttingen.

GIAMIL, *Documenta* = GIAMIL, S., *Documenta relationum inter S. Sedem Apostolicam et Assyriorum Orientalium seu Chaldaeorum Ecclesiam, tum jam edita tum maiori ex parte nunc primum ex archivio Vaticano prolata, notisque historicis illustrata*, I-XIII. Romae 1898-1903.

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## INTRODUCTION

The efflorescence of Eastern Syrian Christianity, spanning several centuries, reaching even into the middle ages, cannot but evoke admiration from the student of history. When viewed against the spectrum of the whole of Christendom, this striation manifests a momentous rôle in the history of Christianity. The reasons for this are both weighty and respectable.

The external conditions under which Christians lived in the empire of the Sassanides were very unfavorable. That is the least one must say about the situation. Unlike the Christians who lived within the boundaries of Byzantium, enjoying the support and protection of the state in the promotion of ecclesiastical activities, the Christians in Persia had to be content without any such blessing or opportunity. Moreover, under the Sassanides, Mazdaism adjudged the Christian community a foreign body in society<sup>1</sup>. As a result not only were Christians the object of distrust and suspicion but also of enmity. This frequently eventuated in open violence<sup>2</sup>. The life which had so assiduously been cultivated for several decades was destroyed. The wounds inflicted healed but slowly.

Nor was this deplorable situation confined to the rule of Shahpuhr II<sup>3</sup>. Close upon the heels of the attempt by the Persian Church to re-organize itself and to strengthen the fibre of its ecclesiastical structure<sup>4</sup>, the decree of Jazdgard<sup>5</sup> struck like a

<sup>1</sup> 'Le clergé zoroastrien était intolérant, mais son intolérance était motivée surtout par des raisons politiques. Le zoroastrisme n'était pas une religion propagandiste; ses chefs n'étaient pas pleins de zèle pour le salut des âmes de tout le monde. Mais en dedans des frontières de l'empire elle prétendait à une domination absolue', CHRISTENSEN, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> LABOURT, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 43 ff., 104 ff.

<sup>3</sup> VÖÖBUS, *History of Asceticism*, I, p. 234 ff.

<sup>4</sup> The synodical acts of this important convocation that was opened on the first of February 410 in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, have survived, *Synodicon orientale*, p. 17 ff.; cf. VÖÖBUS, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen*, II, chapter I.

<sup>5</sup> The gist of the edict issued in 420 appears in the acts of martyrdom of Mār 'Abdā and his companions, *Acta martyrum*, IV, p. 250.

lightning bolt. The Church staggered under the blow<sup>6</sup>. Still other attacks were in the offing<sup>7</sup>.

But these hardships, sufferings and patent persecutions are not the only witnesses of the actual conditions of existence the Christians experienced under the reign of the Sassanides. More subtle indications can be elicited. For example, Baršaumā and his companions felt themselves compelled to take positions against certain ascetic trends — those phenomena particularly provoking to the adherents of the Mazda religion<sup>8</sup> — in view of the precarious political climate. Such an action was necessary regardless of the fact that this decision excited a new crisis<sup>9</sup> for Baršaumā and his colleagues because the reforms proposed involved implications of the utmost gravity for the bearers of the ascetic heritage. In the last analysis, the acceptance of the Nestorian Creed must also be considered from this angle and in this context.

Concomitant with the Islamic invasion, the Syrian Christians changed rulers. The brief respite afforded them under the rule of the more lenient Omayyads proved to be a period of transition. The regime of the Abbasides brought strictures of various kinds<sup>10</sup>.

But despite the grim ingredients of persecution — intrigue, chicanery, hardship, oppression, setback and suffering — Christianity in Persia showed a surprising vitality, stamina and vigor. Its dynamic would not be restrained. The Syrian orbit could not confine it. It advanced beyond the boundaries of the Syriac-speaking zone penetrating even to regions beyond the Oxus river. Such manifestations of spiritual power exhibit the potency of the home church in full measure.

We cannot refrain from amplifying what has been said in this regard. The strength of the filial churches beyond the Oxus may

<sup>6</sup> VÖÖBUS, *History of Asceticism*, I, p. 284 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294 ff.

<sup>8</sup> The virtue of virginity irritated the Persians. According to the ancient Persian tradition 'one should persevere much in the begetting of children — only for the acquisition of further good works', *Šāyast-ne-šāyast*, X, 22, p. 138. About the serious implications of this Mazdaean attitude for the Christians in Persia, see VÖÖBUS, *History of Asceticism*, I, p. 254 ff.

<sup>9</sup> About the reaction among the bearers of the ascetic heritage, caused by the reforms within the clergy, see VÖÖBUS, *Réformes de Baršaumā*, p. 13 ff., 26 ff.

<sup>10</sup> SPULER, *Nestorianische Kirche*, p. 145 ff.

be gauged from literary, archaeological and other documentary evidence. We possess information about a number of metropolitan sees in the vast region beyond the Oxus, each having twelve (or six) bishops under its jurisdiction<sup>11</sup>. Vestigial evidence, demonstrating the existence of such communities, comes from India<sup>12</sup>, Soghdiana<sup>13</sup>, Turkestan<sup>14</sup>, Turfan<sup>15</sup>, Manchuria<sup>16</sup> and Siberia<sup>17</sup>.

Nor does this complete the portrait! East Syrian Christianity even penetrated China. The Christian faith was established there centuries before the Franciscans arrived. Chinese documents and archaeological remains<sup>18</sup>, above all the monument of Si-ngan-fu<sup>19</sup>, speak of the energetic activity of the East Syrian missionaries and, in particular, of their courage in competing with the Buddhist monasteries. Perhaps, this explains the initial sympathy of the authorities for these men. And when the overtures, so promising in result, had to recede before a hardening attitude, culminating in the proclamation of King Wu-Tsung in 845 A.D. which prohibited the activities of the immigrant missionaries, new fields of labor were found in Central Asia.

The dynamic of the East Syrians shows itself in another way, that of literary creativity. So strong was the thrust and pulse of the Christian communities upon the literary culture that the Syriac literature surpasses all other Aramaic literatures. In this respect, the Nestorian branch must be credited with its share. In extent and variety, in character and historical significance, it

<sup>11</sup> 'Amr presents a list arranged according to the rank of precedence and his catalog includes the metropolitans of India, Samarkand in Soghdiana, Turkestan, Khân Baliq and Fâliq, Tangut and Kashgar and Nuākith, in Eastern Turkestan, *De patriarchis*, p. 126. More detailed information about Christianity among the Turks located near the Uighur Turks, is given by a letter written by a Philoxenos to Abū 'Afr, Ms. Manch. Ryl. syr. 59, fol. 99a-107b.

<sup>12</sup> About the manuscripts and inscriptions see MINGANA, *Early Spread of Christianity*, p. 67 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Fragments of liturgical manuscripts, MÜLLER, *Soghdische Texte*, p. 1 ff.

<sup>14</sup> SACHAU, *Literatur-Bruchstücke*, p. 964 ff.

<sup>15</sup> MÜLLER, *Handschriften-Reste*, p. 1 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Inscriptions on gravestones.

<sup>17</sup> Inscriptions on gravestones in Semirychensk in South Siberia, CHWOLSON, *Syrische Grabinschriften; Syrisch-nest. Grabinschriften* I-II.

<sup>18</sup> SÆKI, *Nestorian Documents*, p. 20 ff.

<sup>19</sup> HARVET, *Stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, I-III; SÆKI, *Nestorian Monument*, p. 1 ff.

compares worthily with the literary creation of the West Syrians. When compared with the latter, it is weak in annalistic literature properly so called; but this deficiency is somewhat balanced by many diverse works in historiography. Their manysided interest in the historical embraces several areas, such as the history of educational institutions, of literature and of monastic establishments.

The power of the East Syrians reflects itself also in a certain refinement of spirit and in a deepening of the spiritual life. The literary sources plainly show how widely the themes of mysticism were cultivated. Certain figures played eminent rôles in this arena. A whole team of prolific authors, of enviable reputation, bent their talents towards the fruition of the impulses in this domain.

The importance of this avenue of life cannot be underestimated. That literary production which was inspired by the mystical movement, owing to the quality of its spirituality, secured respect far beyond confessional boundaries, and even beyond the frontiers of the Syriac idiom. A considerable number of their works commanded such esteem that translation into other languages was necessary. The conceptions of the mystical life, fostered by these men, became fundamental in animating an important movement, namely, Islamic mysticism, to which it transmitted a rich legacy. Rather than being severely impeded by the Islamic conquest, this stream broadened into ever wider channels.

Still another salient mirrors the dynamism of the East Syrians. That is their interest in education — a marked idiosyncrasy. Their concern for the expansion of the network of educational foci is quite amazing. One branch of their literature, that devoted to the history of the schools, is not paralleled among the West Syrians. Of the number of works concentrating upon this area, little has survived. However, something remains to give us an idea about this genre of literature.

With all this in mind, it is most rewarding to attempt to trace the pathways leading to the sources of energy and vitality of the East Syrians. Many of these remain hidden; others are very difficult to trace. But one of these can be investigated with anticipation of some success, namely, the centers of education nurturing and enriching light, serving the purpose of deepening the spiritual life.

Among all the schools of the Eastern Syrians, one occupies a

unique place. It claimed to be the 'universitas studiorum'. It was located in Nisibis<sup>20</sup> — a town that had been the pride of Byzantium until it was annexed by the Persians in 361 A.D. Among the other radii of intellectual and spiritual life, it held a position of pre-eminence. It was destined to attain an extraordinary élan profoundly affecting the spiritual culture of Syrian Christianity, planting here the torch of learning which had passed from Edessa<sup>21</sup>.

Soon after its appearance upon the scene, it became a center of spiritual renewal. One cannot exaggerate its structural contribution to that wealth of religious expression characteristic of East Syrian Christianity. Nearly all the great luminaries, church leaders, authors and teachers drew light, inspiration, knowledge and spiritual energy from this institution. The stereotyped refrain which occurs over and over again in most of the annalistic, biographical and hagiographical sources, namely, that this or that man was attracted to the school at Nisibis to sit for a shorter or longer period at the feet of celebrated and admired teachers, is signal evidence of the point. These sources speak with pride about the great advantages of those who attended this school in order 'to draw spiritual milk and to drink from the sweet waters of orthodoxy'<sup>22</sup>.

Even more must be said. This center of learning attained such a degree of fame that this would not be restricted to the Orient but spread to Europe and Africa.

The treatment of the history of the School of Nisibis is contingent upon the availability of sources. Since regrettably they are not equally ample for all the periods, the scope of the undertaking is restricted. This is the reason why we are unable to trace in equal detail the history of the school beyond the beginning of the 7th century, when, after Henānā, its last director of renown, the School of Nisibis lost its preeminence. The sources suddenly are few and scanty and do not allow us to do more than append a summary survey in the form of

<sup>20</sup> This name has become so popular that it has been retained here although Nišibīn is the correct form.

<sup>21</sup> This name, too, has become so popular that it has been retained here, although the accurate form is 'Ūrhāi.

<sup>22</sup> MEŠIḤAZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XIX, p. 69.

an epilogue. We are all the more grateful for the fortunate circumstance that there are sources available which enable us to illuminate just that period in the history of the school during which it experienced its floration and preeminence. This is cause for great satisfaction and rejoicing.

# I

## PRE-HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL OF NISIBIS

### 1. THE ORIGIN AND THE EARLIEST PERIOD OF THE SCHOOL OF EDESSA

The School of Nisibis was born during the stormy events which divided the Syrian Christians — a cleavage permanently splitting them into separate entities. From that point onwards, each group began to have its own history. But one of the happy results of the otherwise debilitating effect produced by the contentions, quarrels and divisions occasioned by the doctrinal controversies within the body of Syrian Christianity was the genesis of the School of Nisibis.

The roots of the School reach deep into the metropolis of Mesopotamian Christianity, in particular, the School of Edessa. We must therefore review this *Vorgeschichte*, the history of the School of Edessa and the development embedded in that chain of events which shaped the physiognomy of Syrian Christianity within the boundaries of Byzantium.

From its very inception, the School of Edessa established links with the Eastern regions. This fact is certain among the many uncertain and dubious traditions concerning its origin and earliest development. The Edessene population gave it the name 'the School of the Persians' or 'the Christian Didascaleion for the Persians'<sup>1</sup>. From this it follows that the refugees from the area of Nisibis, called 'Persians' by the Syrians in the western regions, were those who found new possibilities for fostering their educational traditions at Edessa. There can hardly be any doubt that there were teachers among the refugees who settled in that city. This much can be said with assurance.

But matters become very obscure when we look at the specific claims embedded in the traditions. One tradition argues that Ephrēm, after settling in Edessa, founded the school known as 'the School of Edessa'. Many have been favorably impressed by

<sup>1</sup> THEODOROS ANAGNOTES, *Excerpta ex eccl. hist.*, col. 185.

this view<sup>2</sup>, or at least have found it probable<sup>3</sup>. But caution is indicated. Sozomenos, who seems to have been somewhat informed about the activities of Ephrēm, having access to older traditions, knows nothing about any such accomplishment by Ephrēm<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, there is a rival tradition. Its provenance compels us to listen. It stems from the circles which attempted to collect the memories of Ephrēm for biographical purposes. It is instructive to see that they credit the numerous disciples of Ephrēm with that achievement<sup>5</sup>.

Now, it is true that the tradition regarding Ephrēm's rôle as the founder of the School of Edessa is recorded in the work of Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān<sup>6</sup>, a witness whose credentials appear, generally, to be in good order. Data in this work, having to do with the school, its directors, the instruction and literary activity leave us with the impression that he had good sources at his disposal. But, in regard to the issue at hand, it is not necessary to take him at his word. It is questionable whether the sources he had regarding the school are as reliable in the early stages as they are for the later history of the institution.

On the other hand, there is no cogent reason for us to reject the tradition altogether. It may contain a historical kernel.

Ephrēm is reported to have been a teacher at an earlier time in Nisibis<sup>7</sup>. Certain hints by Ephrēm himself substantiate the report<sup>8</sup>. The only conclusion possible for us, in view of these considerations and from a critical viewpoint, is this, that Ephrēm was one among those who laid the foundation for that undertaking

<sup>2</sup> LECLERCQ, *Édesse*, col. 2093, cf. col. 2095; BARDENHEWER, *Geschichte altk. Literatur*, IV, p. 351; BARDY, *Églises de Perse*, p. 326; ORTIZ DE URBINA, *Patrologia syriaca*, p. 54; VAN ROEY, *École d'Édesse*, col. 1431.

<sup>3</sup> BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Historia eccl.* III, 16, col. 1085 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Historia Ephraemi* XIX, col. 35.

<sup>6</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 381.

<sup>7</sup> Ephrēm appears as a *mepašqānā* 'instructor', 'expositor' or 'commentator', *ibid.*, p. 377.

<sup>8</sup> In a hymn, he leaves us with the impression that Walageš, bishop of Nisibis, a man who since his youth had lived as an ascetic, and later became a priest, preacher and lecturer in the exposition of the Scriptures, served Ephrēm as a personal example and inspiration, *Carmina Nisibena* XV, p. 40-41.

which grew into an important school<sup>9</sup>. But it is certain that the honor of being its founder cannot be given to him. No one would have deprived him of that merit had it rightfully been his.

Just as the origin of the school, located in a complex of buildings near the Pond of Abraham<sup>10</sup>, is shrouded in darkness, so is its earliest history. The most trustworthy information can offer us no more than that considerable progress did not come until the demise of Ephrēm<sup>11</sup>. The growth that followed is assigned to Ephrēm's disciples whose efforts spread the reputation of the school over wide areas. The body of the assembly grew, and 'brothers' began to converge upon it<sup>12</sup>.

We may also safely assume that the bishops of Edessa offered their hand in the advancement of the affairs of the school. In the case of Rabbūlā<sup>13</sup>, we have direct information in a panegyric which has come down to us in Greek<sup>14</sup>. What it says about this interest in and care for the instruction in the School of Edessa<sup>15</sup> is very instructive, particularly since further sources for this period are wanting.

<sup>9</sup> VÖÖBUS, *Literary-Critical Studies in Ephrem*, p. 125.

<sup>10</sup> BAR 'EBRĀIĀ, *Chronicon eccl.*, II, col. 54 f.

<sup>11</sup> June 4th, 373 according to the Chronicle of Edessa, *Chronicon Edessenum*, XXX, p. 4; according to Ms. Ox. Marsh 101, fol. 106a, Ms. Berl. Sach. 165, fol. 7a and Ms. Šarf. Patr. 28, fol. 102 b, in the year 684 A.Gr. but reckoned as the year 372 A.D.

[illegible]

<sup>13</sup> He ruled from 411 to 435.

<sup>14</sup> See VÖÖBUS, *Vie d'Alexandre en grec*, p. 14 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Συνέστησεν δὲ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ πόλει ὁ κύριος ἐξ ἀρχῆς συριακῆς γλώσσης· παιδευτήριον· (ἡγοῦν τῶν πλησίον πόλεων) ἡγούμενοι γὰρ καὶ δυνατοὶ ἐν τῷ βίῳ τοὺς αὐτῶν παῖδας ἐν αὐτῇ ἀποστέλλουσι παιδεύεσθαι, ὁ οὖν ἐπίσκοπος Ὑάββουλος ἔλθων εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔσπευδε, συνεργούντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, πάντας ἐνώσαι εἰς τὴν ἀληθὴ καὶ βεβαίαν πίστιν, ἀεὶ ἀγωνιζόμενος ἀκόλουθα τῷ διδασκάλῳ πράττειν καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐπὶ τούτου ἔστιν εἰπεῖν... τοὺς δὲ ξένους παῖδας τῶν Ἑλλήνων προσκαλούμενος ἀπὸ τῶν παιδευτηρίων δεύτερον τοῦ μηνὸς καὶ συνάγων πρὸς ἑαυτόν, ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, *Vie d'Alexandre*, p. 673 f.

## 2. THE PERIOD UNDER THE FIRST DIRECTORS

For a considerable span of time, any information about the school, its directors and activities, lies hidden behind an impenetrable curtain of history. It is most reluctant to yield any illumination upon our subject. The first ray of light we perceive focuses upon that epoch under the director — the first we know by name — Qiiōrē<sup>1</sup>. He is introduced as a man in whom ascetic qualifications, administrative ability and scholarly interest were pre-eminently combined. It is reported that, despite his ascetic practice and the chastisement of fasting, he pursued his duties with vitality and vigor<sup>2</sup>. Proof of this lies in the fact that he incorporated in himself administrative responsibility and the office of interpretation<sup>3</sup>, i.e., the chair of exegesis which at that time included still other duties<sup>4</sup>.

The information that the chair of exegesis at that time included also other responsibilities for elementary instruction seems to be an indication, that at least during the first part of the fifth century, the operation of the school still moved within the realm of limited possibilities. This appears in even clearer form in Barḥadbešabbā who bluntly says that Qiiōrē fulfilled all the responsibilities in the school<sup>5</sup> which according to their functions are described in the same way<sup>6</sup>.

In one respect our information begins to flow more freely. This director lives on in the tradition as a man who introduced a reform in the use of the basic texts employed in instruction. This step was of immense importance not only in regard to the subsequent fate of the school but also for the history of Syrian Christianity. Qiiōrē was the man who realized the need for

<sup>1</sup> He cannot be identified with Qürillōnā, known by his poetical works, as Scher has proposed in *Écrivains syriens*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 382.

<sup>3</sup> ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ 'the administration of interpretation', *ibid.*, p. 382<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>4</sup> ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ... ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ 'the office of reading, of the *mehagiānūtā* and of the speech of the church', *ibid.*, p. 282<sub>5-6</sub>.

<sup>5</sup> ܡܠ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ 'he carried the entire work of the school', *Histoire*, II, p. 598<sub>12-13</sub>.

<sup>6</sup> ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ ܩܝܝܘܪܝܐ 'reading as well as *hegiānūtā* and interpretation; he had however also the charge (lit. assurance) of the word', *ibid.*, 598<sub>13-14</sub>.

replacing the texts produced by Ephrēm, normative up to that time, with the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia<sup>7</sup>.

Just how long Qiiōrē was enabled to lead the school is not known. Chronological data<sup>8</sup>, if combined<sup>9</sup>, would place his death in the period 436/7 A.D. Scher has popularized this date<sup>10</sup>, particularly by the edition of the work of Barḥadbešabbā<sup>11</sup>. Since then scholars have accepted this chronology<sup>12</sup>. However there are circumstances challenging such a conclusion<sup>13</sup>.

While our knowledge about Qiiōrē is very meager, we know still less concerning Rabbūlā. His name appears in Barḥadbešabbā where he is introduced as a *mepašqānā*<sup>14</sup> and therefore the head of the school. This is not an isolated tradition. The memory that there was a head of the school by the name of Rabbūlā emerges also in Mari<sup>15</sup>. Whether he was really the last director before Narsai, is another question. There is no assurance that this is not a mistake, a confusion with the Bishop Rabbūlā.

### 3. THE PERIOD UNDER THE DIRECTORSHIP OF NARSAI

The election of Narsai marked a new day in the history of the advancement of the school. Administrative leadership and the reins of spiritual guidance were placed in the hands of a man from the territory of the Sassanides, who had matured with the school within which he had spent a number of years<sup>1</sup>. That his candidature had no rival indicates the confidence reposed in him by the electoral assembly.

<sup>7</sup> See page 14 f.

<sup>8</sup> See page 59 ff.

<sup>9</sup> If Narsai was expelled from Edessa in 457, and before that date he was director of the school of Edessa for 20 years, then he must have taken over his office in 437, which date would mark the time of Qiiōrē's death.

<sup>10</sup> *Écrivains syriens*, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 386, footnote 1.

<sup>12</sup> This date has been accepted as fixed chronology, and so I also have followed the conventional path in my *History of Asceticism*, II, p. 403, 411, before I began to examine it critically.

<sup>13</sup> See page 60 ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 598 f.

<sup>15</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 39.

<sup>1</sup> See page 59 f.

With the election of Narsai to this post, a new impetus was imparted to the affairs of the school. This came to the fore already in the proceedings in connection with the election. Narsai had stipulated, as a condition of his consent to elevation, that assistants be provided. While giving due credit to the extraordinary stamina of his predecessor, Narsai thought this reform important for strengthening the functions involved in the chair of interpretation<sup>2</sup>.

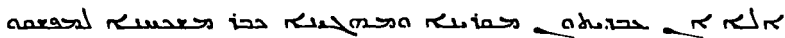
Unfortunately, we possess all too little information about the men in service at this institution. What we do have throws some light upon the work carried on, the potentialities of scholarship and enthusiasm in these halls of ivy, and even a bit about the leading figures on the staff.

Particular notice is given to Hibā, a teacher of the school prior to his ordination as bishop of Edessa in 435. Though proof is absent, we may surely conjecture that the relationships between the bishop and the school during the twenty-two years of his bishopric were more than formal. A man of his resources and energy would hardly have found himself exhausted by the duties of the office committed to him.

Hibā is well-known for his literary work. While none of his works has survived, he is said to have composed an exegetical and apologetic work as well as *madrāṣē* and homilies<sup>3</sup>. But beyond his contribution to original Syriac literature, he is better known by far for another phase of his activity as is recognizable from the epithet with which the Syriac tradition has immortalized him — 'Translator'.

His contribution in this respect will be discussed later<sup>4</sup>.

Of the other men associated with the School of Edessa, a number are known by name. About the activities of Ma'nā, Kūmī and Prōbā, we shall say more later<sup>5</sup>. A particular rôle is ascribed to Mārūn, a presbyter in Edessa called a 'scribe of the School of the

<sup>2</sup>   
BARHADBEŠANBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 383<sup>11-12</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> A commentary on the Proverbs; the *tūrgāmē* and the *madrāṣē*; it is not clear what kind of work was written by him in his controversy with a 'quarrelsome one', see 'AB-DIŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LXI, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> See page 15 f.

<sup>5</sup> See page 17 ff.

Persians'<sup>6</sup>. This seems to refer to his office as a teacher of the art of writing<sup>7</sup>. Others are simply names : 'Abšuwātā of Ninive, Jōhannān Garmqāiā, Mikā, Paulē bar Qaqai of Karkā de-Bēt Hūzāiē, Abraham Mādāiā and 'Ezaliā of the Monastery of Kephar Māri<sup>8</sup>. Among them Baršaumā was one of the most outstanding. He must have developed such an activity that it became unbearable for others with the result that, at the council of Ephesus, it was demanded that he must be expelled<sup>9</sup>.

There was also a small minority in opposition devoted to the Monophysite convictions. This spirit of resistance was fostered by Mār Pāpā of Bēt Lāpāt, Mār 'Aksnāiā of Taḥal, his brother Addai, Bar Ḥadbešabbā of Qardū and Beniamin 'Ārāmāiā<sup>10</sup>.

#### 4. THE CHARACTER OF THE SCHOOL OF EDESSA

All indications suggest that instruction at the School of Edessa followed a certain propaedeutic dependent upon a cycle of disciplines designed to meet the needs of students on the preparatory level.

Here as in other schools of the Syrian tradition<sup>1</sup> it was the practice that students began studies with the reading of the Psalter. Instruction also included correctness in reading and accurate pronunciation in accordance with the system of vowels which the School of Edessa had originated. In addition, the art of reading required for liturgical usage was considered an integral part of such courses.

The instruction on the preparatory level, as a prerequisite for further studies, naturally included instruction in writing and training in the art of writing.

From this point onward, instruction gradually moved to the reading and study of New Testament and Old Testament books.

<sup>6</sup> ܫܡܥܘܢ ܕܒܝܬ ܐܪܫܡܐ ŠEM'ON OF BĒT ARŠAM, *Epistola*, p. 351.

<sup>7</sup> See also the *Statutes*, p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> *Epistola*, p. 351 f.

<sup>9</sup> *Akten Ephes. Synode*, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> ŠEM'ON OF BĒT ARŠAM, *Epistola*, p. 352 f.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ms. Sach. 221, fol. 46a; see also the story of Mār Bassos, Ms. Šarf. Patr. 247, fol. 73a.

The lectures also included the original writings of the Syrian fathers.

The tasks of teaching these courses were laid upon the shoulders of several teachers who were responsible for these ancillary disciplines. Above them, there was the chair of the *mepašqānā*<sup>2</sup>, 'interpreter' or 'commentator' who occupied the position of first rank in the school. There is no doubt about the nature of this function. Only the exegesis of the Scriptures can be meant including therein the responsibility to interpret, using all the resources available, such as the literary, philological, lexical and historical studies.

The need to cultivate such resources must have been increasingly felt. In fact, we learn that the traditions of the Antiochian school of exegesis brought about a reform in the standard text-book materials which were in use. Normative works which had been used in the school from the earliest time were the commentaries of Ephrēm<sup>3</sup>. But in the passage of time, it became more apparent that the commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia were better suited for this purpose. Qīiōrē is reported to have come to this realization. An interesting statement illustrates this : 'But about one thing he was worried, (namely) that the commentaries of the Interpreter had not yet been translated into the Syriac language.'<sup>4</sup> The reform is said to have been carried out under his rule : 'After he carried out the (translation) of the interpretation of Theodore into Syriac and it was made available to (the body) of the assembly of Edessa, he found satisfaction along with the assembly.'<sup>5</sup> This certainly cannot be taken to mean more than that the translation work was initiated by him and a number of the works of Theodore were translated under his auspices<sup>6</sup>. These works were then introduced into the instructional process and made normative for the school.

<sup>2</sup> ܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ

<sup>3</sup> ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܝܫܐܢ, ܝܫܐܢ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܝܫܐܢ 'he was interpreting from the traditions of Ephrēm', BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 382<sub>9</sub>.

<sup>4</sup> ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ : ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ *ibid.*, p. 382<sub>7-8</sub>.

<sup>5</sup> ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ : ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ ܕܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ *ibid.*, p. 383<sub>3-4</sub>.

<sup>6</sup> See page 16 ff.

The curriculum included other subjects as well. Because Edessa had an advantage in view of its geographical location, being located between the Hellenistic culture and that of the Syrian Orient, it utilized this advantage by employing Greek philosophy in its curriculum. It was introduced at the time under discussion. In the second quarter of the fifth century, we note that the philosophy of the Peripatetics belonged to the courses of instruction at the school<sup>7</sup>. Other fields of scholarship were also included such as profane history, geography and even such subjects as astronomy.

The scope of the activities of the School of Edessa, however hidden from our eyes, reveals another dimension. The school was patterned or designed to be wider than that which has been covered in the previous paragraphs. It was to develop into a study center within which stimuli were not only conceived but imparted to several projects of importance. We are fortunate that we are allowed to receive some glimpse of the spirit that must have animated this center of learning in at least one branch. This deals with the realm of Greek studies in which the primary projects were those of translating Greek works into Syriac and making them available to that audience. That this resulted in an enrichment of instruction at the school can safely be surmised.

This interest must have belonged to an earlier period in the history of the school. According to every indication, the School of Edessa had been the main center of these activities during the early days of the Syriac literature. It certainly is significant that the most ancient Syriac manuscripts possessing this kind of content are Edessene, such as the one, dated 411 A.D.<sup>8</sup> and another dated 462 A.D.<sup>9</sup>.

The man who is described in the Syrian tradition as the very soul of this undertaking is Hībā who, as we have already seen, has been immortalized in Syrian tradition by the epithet 'Translator'. His name is associated with the projects of translation

<sup>7</sup> See page 20 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,150, contains the Syriac translation of the Recognitions of Clement, the discourses of Titos of Bostra against the Manichees, the Theophania and the History of the Palestinian martyrs, both of Eusebios.

<sup>9</sup> This codex contains the Church History of Eusebios.

of the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia<sup>10</sup> and others. There can hardly be any question that he played a leading rôle in carrying out this project in concert with others<sup>11</sup>. This much can be accepted without any hesitation whatsoever although difficulties arise in particular details.

'Abdīšō' speaks of Hībā as the man who among the translators of the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia carried out the main bulk. We cannot however take this at face value. Serious questions are occasioned by the fact that when he wrote a letter to Mari, before Rabbūlā's death, in which he speaks of the literary heritage of Theodore, there is no indication whatsoever that Hībā had done any translating or had planned to do so<sup>12</sup>. In this connection, some official reports from Edessa reflecting conditions there before the year 449 reveal the same thing<sup>13</sup>. On the basis of these observations, it seems more likely that Hībā was primarily a spiritual leader who arranged and directed the translation project as an integral part of the propagational interest on behalf of Antiochian theology. John, the bishop of Sebaste in Armenia, during the Synod in Ephesus in the year 449 A.D., characterized Hībā just in this way. He said that Hībā was a man who had long-range plans and far-reaching aspirations<sup>14</sup>.

This, indeed, is a conclusion that finds confirmation in an anonymous source, well informed<sup>15</sup> about the scholars involved in

<sup>10</sup> ܡܥܬܝܢ ܕܬܝܕܘܪܐ ܕܝܫܘܥܐ ܕܬܝܕܘܪܐ 'the translations of the *mēmre* and the *tūrgāmē* of his masters', ŠEM'ŌN OF BĒT ARŠAM, *Epistola*, p. 350.

<sup>11</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LXI, p. 85.

<sup>12</sup> The Greek translation of this letter which was included in the synodical acts, and in this way has survived, tells about the works of Theodore, *Epistola*, p. 32. The more remarkable is its complete silence about the translation-project.

<sup>13</sup> In these documents every possible accusation against Hībā is gathered. However, his theological enemies are quite silent about Hībā's translation of Theodore's works. We can gather only one conclusion from this: they did not know about Hībā's translations. This is all the more significant when we note that among the detailed accusations, there is one more important point: the works of Theodore were found in Hībā's apartment! But no suggestion was made that he was guilty of the much greater sin, namely, the sin of translating them into Syriac and introducing them into Syrian Christianity. See *Akten Ephes. Synode*, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> His source is: ܕܠܥܝܢܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܫܘܠܝܬܐ 'the traditions of the masters of the schools'.

the Graeco-Syro translation-literature : 'The holy Theodore interpreted the Scriptures in Greek, and Mār Hībā, bishop of Edessa, translated (them) from the Greek into Syriac, together with other men, trained in the divine Scriptures' <sup>16</sup>.

Hibā was fortunate in finding colleagues and co-workers worthy of the spiritual atmosphere that made the school famous near and far. One of these co-workers was a man by the name of Kūmī. He was active in the translation work of the writings of Theodore<sup>17</sup>. Fortunately, this time we have more evidence at hand. For example, in regard to his translation of Theodore's commentary on the Letter to the Romans, carried out in cooperation with a Priest Dani'el, a special notation has come down to us<sup>18</sup>. Samples of his translation still survive in fragments of a very ancient codex which was probably written in the fifth century<sup>19</sup>. The original translation-work, of which we have but a brief description<sup>20</sup>, has not survived the ravages of history<sup>21</sup>.

Another man who was associated with the work of the school is Prōbā. But the only information we possess about him is found in a subscription to a codex which refers to him as a 'presbyter, chief-physician and archdeacon of Antioch in Syria' <sup>22</sup>. What his relations with the school may have been cannot be determined. According to Baumstark he was not a teacher in the School of Edessa. If, indeed, there existed texts which present this claim <sup>23</sup> they are not able to change this judgement. For his name does not appear in the list of the teachers of the school in Šem'ōn of Bēt Aršām <sup>24</sup> and the historical references we just quoted also do not say this. The possibility of his having been connected with the projects of the school without

<sup>16</sup> Թե՛ս յոյժն Կոճիկ քաղաքս Երևանի, ինչ Երևանի վրայ  
 Երևան քաղաք ., Երևան քաղաքի քաղաք, ինչ Երևան  
 Երևան քաղաք, ինչ Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,138, fol. 312 a.

<sup>17</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LXI, p. 85.

<sup>18</sup> ĪŠŌ'DĀD OF MERV, *Commentaries*, V, 1, p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,669, fol. 1a ff. contains fragments of Theodore's work on the incarnation.

<sup>20</sup> GENNADIUS, *De viris illust.*, XII, p. 65 f.

<sup>21</sup> Ms. Seert 88, cf. SCHER, *Catalogus*, p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> Ms. Bagd. 522, fol. 1a; cf. Ms. Berl. Sach. 226, fol. 12b, 13a.

<sup>23</sup> So Giamil, see BAUMSTARK, *Syrisch-arabische Biographien*, p. 141.

<sup>24</sup> *Epistola*, p. 345 f.

being a teacher, is open <sup>25</sup>. He also was associated with the translation project of the works of Theodore <sup>26</sup>. Samples of his work in regard to this translation project have not survived although a little tract of his contribution to original Syriac literature is known <sup>27</sup>.

Another eminent teacher was Ma'nā of Širāz, whose data have been confused <sup>28</sup> with those of a homonyme <sup>29</sup>, and must be carefully kept separate. While he, in the later period of his life in Persia, became active in Syro-Persian translation-works <sup>30</sup>, in the earlier period of his life in Edessa, he was attracted by the translation-projects in process at the school of Edessa. He did some work on the translation of Theodore's writings <sup>31</sup> but spent most of his time on those of Diodor of Tarsus <sup>32</sup>. Since the Syrians knew of a large number of volumes of the works of Diodor in Syriac

<sup>25</sup> Baumstark judged differently, admitting no relation with the School of Edessa: 'Die tendenziöse Beschäftigung mit Theodoros im Sinne offener oder verdeckter Opposition gegen den siegreichen Kyrillos und die Beschlüsse von Ephesos vertreten unter den Syrern in Antiocheia Prōbā, in Edessa Hibā', *Syrisch-arabische Biographien*, p. 143. 'Dem Allem entspricht es aber, dass die antiochenische Theodorosübersetzung der edessenischen voranging', *ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>26</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LXI, p. 85.

<sup>27</sup> Ms. Berl. Sach. 153, fol. 9a-13a, Ms. Vat. syr. 454, fol. 48a-56a. This tract deals with the numerical value of the Syriac alphabet.

<sup>28</sup> BAR 'EBRĀIĀ, *Chronicon eccl.*, II, col. 53 ff. The same confusion appears in an anonymous list of the Catholicoi in Ms. Vat. syr. 135, fol. 27a.

<sup>29</sup> This is an older Ma'nā of Iranian extraction, who became the successor to Catholicos Jaballāhā in 420 A.D. As a catholicos, he appears only in Šelēmōn of Bāšrā, *Liber apis*, p. 132. According to Eliā bar Šināiā, he was deposed by Jazdgard, sent back to Persis, and was prohibited from using the title of catholicos, *Opus chronologicum*, p. 48.

<sup>30</sup> وعمل ايضاً معنا مداريش وميامر وعنانى من كلما تحتاج اليه البيعة  
Ma'nā بالفارسية وانفذ ما نقله من الكتب الى بلدان البحر والهند

prepared also in Persian the *madrāšē*, *mēmre* and *'ūniātā* in order to be chanted in the church; he sent the books which he translated to the countries of the sea (or ocean) and to India', *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 117<sub>4-6</sub>.

<sup>31</sup> BAR 'EBRĀIĀ, *Chronicon eccl.*, II, col. 82; Ms. Vat. syr. 135, fol. 27a; *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 117.

<sup>32</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116 f.

translation<sup>33</sup>, it seems to be quite clear that Ma'nā carried out this work in cooperation with others. Concerning this translation work by Ma'nā, we also have another witness<sup>34</sup>.

However great the importance of the translation of the works of Diodor, the most extensive project was the translation of the works of Theodore. This fact illustrates the character of this center of learning and study. The project was kept persistently on the agenda. A number of hands were engaged in this labor. As a result of such cooperation a long-range project was materialized. The corpus of the works of Theodore which covered many volumes<sup>35</sup> was almost entirely translated. We are informed that only two works were not included<sup>36</sup>, the rest had been translated into Syriac already before Rabbūlā changed his color and camp. This means that before the death of Theodore in 428 almost all of his literary legacy had been made available to the Syrians. It is a great loss that the tooth of time has so ravaged these treasures that they are today mostly lost. What we possess are only ruins<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, V, p. 276; cf. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 105 f. Not a single work of this rich literary legacy in the Syriac translation has survived. Some excerpts which were salvaged by Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,156, fol. 80a-83b, *Analecta syriaca*, p. 91-100, do not stem from the Nestorian translation work but go back to a compilation of texts in the work of Timotheos Ailuros which was translated into Syriac. Other quotations found in Severos, *Contra impium Grammaticum* and *Philalethes*, cf. ABRAMOWSKI, *Theologischer Nachlass des Diodor*, p. 49 ff., seem to go back to the florilegia of the fathers. An excerpt, Šelēmōn of Bāšrā, *Liber apīs*, p. 162 f., seems to be the only longer piece which has a claim to go back to the translation of the works of Diodor.

<sup>34</sup> Ja'qōb of Serūg, in one of his letters, makes the important statement that 45 years earlier when he was in the School of Edessa, the works of Diodor were available in Syriac translation, *Epistolae*, p. 58. Thus the terminus ad quem would be about 470.

<sup>35</sup> The most complete list of his works is given by 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, XIX, p. 30 ff.

<sup>36</sup> See page 26. One was the commentary on Kohelet. About a codex which existed in the *qubbet el-haznē* in Damascus, see v. SODEN, *Bericht*, p. 829 and about the photographs of this codex, see OPTZ, *Koheletkommentar*, p. 82\*. The second is the commentary on the Fourth Gospel, Ms. Par. syr. 308, *Commentarius in ev. Johannis*; Ms. Alqōš 44 and Ms. Borg. syr. 77, *Commentarius in ev. Johannis Apostoli*; Ms. Ming. syr. 52, fol. 1a-218b.

<sup>37</sup> What has survived of all this rich material, indeed, exists for the most part only in remnants.

The liturgical works have had a more merciful fate. Three commentaries have survived, even in their entirety thanks to one single codex which has escaped destruction. The first is an exposition of the Nicene Creed, Ms. Ming. syr. 561, fol. 1b-71a, *Theodore, Commentary on Nicene Creed*, p. 117-240, *Homélie catéchétiques*, p. 2-280. The second

Another side of the translation efforts, also associated with Hībā, Kūmī and Prōbā<sup>38</sup>, is that which deals with the translation of such Greek philosophical works as provided resources and ammunition in the intellectual battle which the christological controversy provoked. Actually, however, only Prōbā comes into our range of vision in this respect. We have a considerable amount of material at our disposal illustrating his contribution. The Hermeneutics of Aristotle has survived<sup>39</sup> as has a part of his Analyticon<sup>40</sup> and the Isagoge of Porphyrios<sup>41</sup>. This is clearly attested by manuscript evidence. We also have some sections and parts of other works of

is an exposition of the Lord's Prayer, Ms. Ming. syr. 561, fol. 71a-81a, THEODORE, *Commentary on Lord's Prayer*, p. 124-147, *Homélie catéchétiques*, p. 280-320. The third contains the explication of the liturgy of baptism and that of the Eucharist, Ms. Ming. syr. 561, fol. 81b-152a, THEODORE, *Commentary on the Sacraments*, p. 143-265, *Homélie catéchétiques*, p. 320-604.

Of his theological writings only his apologetic work against the Macedonians has been preserved in Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 6714, fol. 178a-187a, *Controversio adversus Macedonios*, p. 635-667. Of his work on the incarnation which once existed in Ms. Seert 88, only some smaller sections have come down to us in Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,669, fol. 1a-18b, THEODORUS, *Fragmenta*, p. 45-93. Of his work against Eunomios only a splinter exists in Ms. Cambr. orient. 1319, fol. 90b-91b, ABRAMOWSKI, *Unbekanntes Zitat* p. 99.

Theodore's exegetical works in Syriac are in an even more miserable situation. Of the commentary on Genesis we have only some portions in Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 17,606, fol. 20a-32b, THEODORUS, *Fragmenta*, p. 1-24, and in Ms. Vat. syr. 120, fol. 1a-5b, *Interprétation de la Genèse*, 47-57. Some small fragments of the commentary on the Minor Prophets exist in Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,668, fol. 32a-36a, THEODORUS, *Fragmenta*, p. 35-44. His commentary on the Psalter has not escaped destruction, the text that has been regarded as his commentary, *Psalmenkommentar*, p. 53-101, and *Exegesis Psalmorum*, is in fact a different work. Some fragments have survived in the exegetical work of Išo'dād, in Ms. Jer. Greek Patr. 10, fol. 364b-365a, 372ab, 378ab. Of his commentary on Luke only a fragment of the introduction exists in Ms. Berl. Sach. 170, fol. 199b.

<sup>38</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ, *Catalogus librorum*, LXI, p. 85.

<sup>39</sup> Ms. Berl. Peterm. 9, fol. 112a-123b, *De hermeneuticis*, p. 22, 25, 27, 29-55; Ms. Vat. syr. 158, fol. 67b-95b, *Aristoteles*, p. 117-118; Ms. Med. Pal. orient. 196; [Ms. Eскур. orient. 652]; Ms. Par. syr. 248, fol. 27b-42b; Ms. Cambr. Add. 3284, fol. 7a-25a; Ms. Ming. syr. 44, fol. 31a-62b; Ms. Ming. syr. 606, fol. 141a-149a; Ms. Alqōš 51, cah. 17, fol. 2a-cah. 27; Ms. Alqōš 52; Ms. Alqōš 53, cah. 14, fol. 6a-cah. 23.

<sup>40</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 158, fol. 95b-106b; Ms. Med. Pal. orient. 196; [Ms. Eскур. orient. 652]; Ms. Par. syr. 248, fol. 43a-48b; Ms. Cambr. Add. 2812, fol. 116a-129b; Ms. Cambr. Add. 3284, fol. 25a-35a; Ms. Berl. Peterm. 9, fol. 104a-112a; *Versione degli Analitici*, p. 322-347; Ms. Alqōš 51, cah. 1, fol. 1a-cah. 4, fol. 6a; Ms. Alqōš 52.

<sup>41</sup> Ms. Bagd. 522, fol. 1b-14b; Ms. Alqōš 53, cah. 1, fol. 1a-cah. 4, fol. 8a; Ms. Ming. syr. 606, fol. 1b-28b.

Aristotle in the Syriac translation <sup>42</sup> which may well conceal other samples of Prōbā's work although it is difficult to fix the provenance with complete certainty.

In the work of Prōbā, indeed, a very important phenomenon enters the field of our vision — Greek philosophical literature for the first time enters the domain of the Syriac idiom already in the 5th century. The claim that Sargīs of Rēš'ainā († 536) was first translator of the Greek philosophical texts, as the Arab <sup>43</sup> and the Jacobite <sup>44</sup> traditions sustain, is erroneous. This enrichment of the Syrian spirit occurred already a generation before Sargīs.

This is not all we are allowed to see. The impact of the translation of the Greek philosophical works was commensurate to the significance of this event. It was strong enough to fructuate studies in a new sphere of thought, making Aristotelian philosophy the lasting foundation of the theological thought of the Syrians.

A contribution like this provided an important stimulus for philosophical studies. However, this incentive was the more enhanced by the production of commentaries on the works of the Greek philosophers. Expressly mentioned of the works with which he had to do are his commentary on the Hermeneutics <sup>45</sup> and the Analyticon of Aristotle <sup>46</sup> and the remains of his commentary on the Isagoge of Porphyrios <sup>47</sup>. Certainly, there are other pieces hidden among texts which have escaped destruction. However they must be described as anonymous.

In Prōbā we have a person, who did not only provide translations but also commentaries on the works of Aristotle and Porphyrios, producing original works on the basis of the Aristotelian philosophy. Here we have the earliest monuments of a philosophical literary

<sup>42</sup> Preserved in the Jacobite as well as in the Nestorian tradition, cf. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 102.

<sup>43</sup> IBN ABĪ UṢAIBĪ'A, '*Uṣūn al-'anbā'*, I, p. 109.

<sup>44</sup> BAR 'EBRĀIĀ, *Chronicon syriacum*, p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> Ms. Berl. Peterm. 9, fol. 124a-141a, *De hermeneuticis*, p. 62-89; Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,660, fol. 1a-46a; Ms. Cambr. Add. 2812, fol. 130a-132a; Ms. Ming. syr. 44, fol. 31a-62b; Ms. Ming. syr. 606, fol. 153a-232b; Ms. Alqōš 54, cah. 7, fol. 14a-20b.

<sup>46</sup> Ms. Berl. Sach. 226, fol. 79a-87b, *Sur les premiers analytiques*, p. 83-122; Ms. Vat. syr. 593, fol. 181a-192a; Ms. Bagd. 522, fol. 79b-90b, fol. 111b-124a; Ms. Alqōš 55, cah. 1, fol. 1a-cah. 2, fol. 7a, cah. 4, fol. 8a-cah. 5, fol. 12a.

<sup>47</sup> Ms. Berl. Sach. 226, fol. 4b-12b, *Syrisch-arabische Biographien*, p. 4-12; Ms. Bagd. 522, fol. 1b-14b.

activity which began to develop independently among the Syrians, making the Organon the foundation for theological reflection in the thought of the East Syrians.

In view of all of this, since we have to do with an exceptionally important phenomenon in the history of thought among the Syrians, we cannot bypass the question of the person of Prōbā. Before we leave this discussion we must turn again to the same question : who was this very remarkable man?

As we already saw Baumstark denies any direct contact between Prōbā and the School of Edessa. It is necessary to reexamine his arguments.

Baumstark dwells heavily on the subscription<sup>48</sup> and finds a definite answer to our question<sup>49</sup>. However, distinction should be made between the subscription which we have no reason to suspect<sup>50</sup> and its interpretation. What the subscription tells us is only that at the time Prōbā composed this particular work he was at Antioch. If he was at that time in West Syria, he could not have been a member of the School of Edessa. This is all the subscription indicates — nothing about his whereabouts before or after that particular period in his life. This is all we can deduce from this source.

An investigation of the form of Prōbā's name<sup>51</sup> cannot help us at all. We get nowhere with such reflections.

Furthermore, Baumstark's reconstruction of Prōbā's activities require his presence in Antioch before Hībā started his work in Edessa, making him an adherent of the Monophysite cause<sup>52</sup>, so that at the time when the Nestorians were cultivating Aristotelian studies, the champions of the Monophysite thought in Antioch were already working on the same field and eagerly promoted it. These conclusions forsake completely any basis we possess for historical judgement. Furthermore, this conjecture is against the Mono-

<sup>48</sup> See footnote 22.

<sup>49</sup> *Syrisch-arabische Biographien*, p. 142 f.

<sup>50</sup> WRIGHT, *Syriac Literature*, p. 65 seems to raise a shadow of doubt over its trustworthiness. Cf. also BROCKELMANN, *Syrische und chr. arab. Literatur*, p. 41.

<sup>51</sup> '...nach dem Westen schon sein Name (Probus) weist, der hier nahe der lateinischen Sprachinsel Berytos nicht selten gewesen sein mag', *Syrisch-arabische Biographien*, p. 143.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143 ff.

physites' own tradition which ascribes the beginnings of these activities to Sargīs.

Finally, what about the report of Šem'ōn of Bēt Aršām? It is true that Šem'ōn does not include Prōbā in the list of names connected with the School of Edessa<sup>53</sup>. However, circumspection is necessary here. Examination of this document shows that it is not a complete list of the teachers at the School of Edessa and of men associated with the institution, but an enumeration of men who after the oppression and the liquidation of the School fled to Persia and took with them the translations of the works of Theodore and Nestorios and spread them there<sup>54</sup>. We cannot expect from the source more than it wants to offer. The argumentum ex silentio is very precarious here. The reason for not mentioning his name may well be that at that time Prōbā did not teach, or did not live or was no longer in Edessa — i.e. the same situation which must apply in the case of some other prominent persons whose residence in Edessa is beyond doubt but who do not appear in the list<sup>55</sup>. This fact shows what we can and cannot expect from this document.

Thus, as the examination of the scanty references shows, there is nothing that stands in the way of the possibility that Prōbā was in cooperation with the School of Edessa, or could have even joined the School of Edessa, as did other teachers of Antioch after 431. This is what 'Abdišō' seems to imply by his words when a straightforward interpretation is given to them. May be other sources which point in the same direction, are not altogether worthless<sup>56</sup>. A center of learning and scholarly study could well have attracted men of stature like Prōbā.

The last observation can be expanded somewhat. Remnants of

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>54</sup> *Epistola*, p. 346, 350.

<sup>55</sup> The names of Hibā and Kūmī are not mentioned either in this nomenclature. We know for certain what was the reason for not mentioning Hibā — he was already dead at the time of tribulation.

<sup>56</sup> Giamil claimed that he had found sources in the manuscripts which justified the following comment on the passage in 'Abdišō's quoted work: 'Kūmī und Prōbā, das waren Leute, geübt und bewandert in verschiedener Gelehrsamkeit und Wissenschaft. Deshalb wurden sie beide berühmte Lehrer an der Perserschule der Stadt Edessa in den Tagen des Mār Īhibā, des Bischofs, und wurden ferner seine Gehilfen bei der Übersetzung der Werke des Theodorus des Erklärers und des Aristoteles aus der griechischen Sprache in die syrische', *Syrisch-arabische Biographie*, p. 141.

another ancient Syriac version of the Hermeneutics have come down to us<sup>57</sup>. They are of anonymous origin. In the light of the manuscript evidence we have to reckon with the fact that there existed at least two ancient Syriac translations of the Hermeneutics of Aristotle in the 5th century. This throws another ray of light on the collective character of the translation projects. Once again a larger team of students is indicated. It also gives us an inkling of the life that must have been pulsating in this center of learning.

#### 5. THE GATHERING STORM

Just when the School of Edessa had entered the phase of its real progress and was winning fame for itself, dark clouds loomed on the horizon. The cyclone of christological controversy which engulfed Eastern Christianity and determined its course far into the future was drawing near.

The twenty-second of June, 431 A.D. marks a very important event in the history of Christianity in the Orient. This was an arsis encompassing an era of tragedies befalling Christianity in these areas leading finally to a definite cleavage between the Syrian Christians. On that day, a condemnatory verdict was brought against Nestorius at a hastily arranged session of the Council of Ephesus. There was no waiting for the arrival of other members of the Council. But those who cherished great expectations towards the settling of the question by way of this anathema were to find their hopes dashed to the ground. The Diophysite movement, having been inaugurated and having had some time for growth was not to be stopped in this arbitrary fashion. The situation was far too advanced to admit so simple a solution. In consequence, despite official steps enforcing the decrees of the Council, the movement began to infiltrate the Syrian Orient.

In Edessa, the metropolis of Osrhoene, the movement found conditions which may be regarded as most favorable. It found open doors even in the most influential places.

First of all, the School of Edessa, this outstanding center of learning, had become a hotbed of Diophysite convictions. Instruction and study was saturated with the spirit of Antiochian biblical

<sup>57</sup> HOFFMANN, *De hermeneuticis*, p. 23 f.

exegesis and the theology of Diodor and Theodore. Now it also became a center for the dissemination of Diophysite propaganda.

Furthermore, the bishop of the town, Rabbūlā, took his stand in favor of the movement. Whatever the reason may have been, he first sided with the Antiochians under the leadership of John, the patriarch of Antioch<sup>1</sup>. These were factors of the greatest importance emboldening the circles of the Diophysite penchant, whether clerical or non-clerical. Matters looked most favorable.

However, this overture proved to be deceptive and illusory. The dream was shortly shattered. Reality enforced a grim outlook. Rabbūlā changed his position on this matter. This must have taken place sometime during 431/432 A.D.<sup>2</sup>, in any case, before Easter of 432 A.D.<sup>3</sup>. This was an ominous sign. The consequences followed in short order. Rabbūlā turned against his former friends and placed Christianity in Osrhoene under severe complication by his impulsive action. He inaugurated relentless fighting and did not hesitate to grasp at any means to combat the Antiochian movement and bring it to its destruction<sup>4</sup>.

A letter written by Hibā and sent to Mari, gives an idea of the situation in Edessa about 433 A.D. He informs us about the conditions and the troublesome experiences of the Persian Christians in Edessa due to the christological quarrels and the agitation that had developed into strife<sup>5</sup>. This account provides a glimpse into

<sup>1</sup> Even at the synod in 431, he took part in the counteraction and accusations against the operations of Cyril of Alexandria. This evidence is given in two letters written by the Antiochian party signed by Rabbūlā together with the fellow members of the synod, *Conciliorum oec. collectio*, IV, p. 1395 f.

<sup>2</sup> Probably in the winter. It is possible that this new orientation was caused by the recently elected Patriarch Maximianus of Constantinople, cf. *Synodicon adv. tragoediam Irenaei*, col. 650.

<sup>3</sup> The *Synodicon adv. tragoediam Irenaei* includes a decree and a letter of Bishop Andreas of Samosata addressed to the Archbishop Alexander of Hierapolis telling about Rabbūlā's activities in Edessa in persecuting Cyril's adversaries, *Epistola*, col. 649 f.

<sup>4</sup> 'Hi qui pro recta fide laborant scripserunt mihi ab Edessa, quod Rabbulas apertissime declinaverit a dogmatibus veritatis, et persequatur rectae fidei defensores ita ut Theodorum quidem beatum rectae glorificationis magistrum praesumeret anathematizare in ecclesia, et multa mala contra eum diffunderet; anathematizaret vero et illos, qui ea, quae illius sunt, legunt... Dicitur autem et praedicare quod una tantum natura sit Christi; et expellere valide hos, qui aliquid aliud dicunt', ANDREAS, *Epistola*, col. 649 f.

<sup>5</sup> *Epistola*, p. 32. A Latin version of this letter appears in *Acta conciliorum oec.*, tomus II, III, 3, p. 39 ff.

the deplorable situation in the community of Edessa divided by the rift between their bishop and his adherents on the one hand, and the great majority of his flock on the other hand<sup>6</sup>.

Rabbūlā also undertook an intensive campaign to wipe out the literature of the Antiochian theologians. Particularly the writings of Theodore were pin-pointed for elimination especially since they were under attack by Cyril of Alexandria to whom Rabbūlā now gave assistance<sup>7</sup>. It is reported that he had all the writings of Theodore burned<sup>8</sup>. How characteristic of the man known as the 'tyrant of Edessa'! Another source says that at that time only two works were spared from the fire<sup>9</sup>. Since he now shared the views of Cyril, he sought to introduce the works of that man to the Syrian audience — this was the other side of his attempt to eliminate his adversaries. Cyril sent one of his works to Edessa<sup>10</sup> to be translated by Rabbūlā, who by doing so, laid the foundation for the basic treasure of Monophysite literature in Syriac. Other works of Cyril were added later<sup>11</sup>.

The effect of these activities and operations was far-reaching though not immediately decisive. But it was destined to influence the final showdown, for the group favoring Cyril against the Antiochian authorities, minority though they were<sup>12</sup>, girded up their

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33 f.

<sup>7</sup> In his letter, written to Cyril, he brands Theodore as the master of Nestorios and the real originator of the heresy, *Opera selecta*, p. 225.

<sup>8</sup> 'Anathematizaret vero et illos, qui ea quae illius sunt legunt; insuper et qui illa, quae scripsimus; et quicunque veniunt, et non portaverint at combustionem Theodori codicem, et eos qui praeter illa, quae Cyrilli sunt, sapiunt', ANDREAS, *Epistola*, col. 649.

<sup>9</sup> These were his commentary on the Fourth Gospel and that on Kohelet; these were spared because they were not yet translated from Greek into Syriac at that time, BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 381.

<sup>10</sup> Περὶ τῆς ὀρθῆς πίστεως, col. 1133 ff. *Opera selecta*, p. 226, 64 ff. About the significance of this source for the history of the gospel text in Syriac, see VÖÖBUS, *Investigations*, p. 10 ff., 34 ff.

<sup>11</sup> The translations of the writings of Cyril are extant in manuscripts, BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 71 ff., but whether Rabbūlā has translated some others among these or whether these were translated under his auspices, is unknown.

<sup>12</sup> Πολλοὶ δὲ μὴ ἔχοντες φόβον θεοῦ πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν [ἡ] προφάσει ζήλον τοῦ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ἢ εἶχον ἔχθραν κεκρυμμένην ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῶν, εἰς ἔργον ἀγαγεῖν ἐσπούδασαν, ὧν εἷς ἐξ αὐτῶν τυγχάνει ὁ τῆς ἡμετέρας πόλεως τύραννος, ὃν καὶ αὐτὸς οὐκ ἀγνοεῖς, ὅστις προφάσει τῆς πίστεως οὐ μόνον τοὺς ζῶντας ἀμύνεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς πάλαι πρὸς τὸν κύριον ἀπεληλυθότας, *Epistola*, p. 33.

loins in preparation for the inevitable struggle that was to come knowing it that it would be decisive.

When death, in 435 A.D., brought an end to the notorious activities of the 'tyrant of Edessa' — and, by the way, his activities must have been heavily curtailed during the last period of his life because of sickness — a new situation developed delighting the oppressed adherents of Antiochian theology. The pro-Antiochian clergy in Edessa seized the long awaited opportunity to elect Hībā to the seat of the metropolis<sup>13</sup>. The Diophysites breathed easier once again and gained courage and inspiration anew. The School of Edessa was again enabled to speak with some boldness, to encourage, develop and spread its Diophysite conviction. It furthered this ambition through its numerous pupils and through its relationships with influential church dignitaries. That one of their colleagues occupied the bishop's seat certainly instilled confidence and brightened their hopes for the future.

However favorable the course appeared to be, in the chain of events charged with an atmosphere of unpredictability, it turned out to be ephemeral. This period indeed, was not more than a short respite for the Diophysites. For the whole constellation of power was changing in favor of their theological rivals. After John, Domnos, who was his nephew, became the successor to the patriarch's seat in Antioch. Two years later, Dioscoros was elevated to Cyril's seat in Alexandria. The first, who had inherited little of his great uncle's energy was no match for his shrewd, ruthless and aggressive rival in Alexandria.

The tug and pull of this game was soon felt. In Syria, Barṣaumā<sup>14</sup> had instigated a campaign of agitation, stirring up the monks<sup>15</sup>. This made him in a special sense 'the father of

<sup>13</sup> *Chronicon Edessenum*, LVIII, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> About his rôle in asceticism, see Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, II, p. 196 ff. His reputation had impressed also the royal circles, as is reflected in the letters issued in the name of Emperor Theodosios and Valentinianos, *Acta conciliorum oec.*, II, 1, p. 71; *ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> According to his vita, Barṣaumā travelled a great deal through Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestina, Phoenicia, Arabia, Petra, Sinai and the territories of Qlaudiā and Isauria, and even into Persia, Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,734, fol. 1a ff.; Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,174, fol. 1a ff.; Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,732, fol. 168b ff.; Ms. Mard. Orth. 273, fol. 24a ff.; Ms. Dam. Patr. 12/17, fol. 72b ff.; Ms. Alep. 27, fol. 1b ff., see Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, II, p. 198 ff.

the monks of the country of Syria'<sup>16</sup>. The waves of this action reached Edessa. Mob actions by the monks were put on the stage<sup>17</sup>. Members of Hībā's own clergy, ready for conspiracy, found support in Uranios<sup>18</sup>, bishop of Imerin<sup>19</sup>. Their first action against Domnos failed but they did not lose heart. When Hībā stepped on their toes<sup>20</sup>, their determination and hatred doubled. Noting the increasing tension, Theodoret attempted to make peace<sup>21</sup> but his words fell upon deaf ears. They were developing intrigue against Flavianos, the patriarch of Constantinople. Acting against the canons, a commission was formed to investigate charges made, and, in this regard, held two sessions, one in Berytus and one in Tyrus. At the session in Tyrus in the spring of 449 A.D.<sup>22</sup>, Hībā came away declared free<sup>23</sup> at the price of making some bitter concessions<sup>24</sup>.

But even this solution was of short duration. Having seen that they could not reach their goal by way of proper channels through church officials, Hībā's enemies decided to realize their aims by mob action and terror. Threatening situations were created, riots incited until they caught their victim<sup>25</sup>. They put such pressure on the authorities<sup>26</sup> that the decisions reached at Berytus were nullified. A new court procedure under the old charges was brought

<sup>16</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 661, fol. 152b.

<sup>17</sup> *Akten Ephes. Synode*, p. 15, 17, 21 *et passim*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Hemerion in Greek, in Osrhoene, cf. GEORGIUS, *Descriptio orbis Romani*, p. 155.

<sup>20</sup> *Akten Ephes. Synode*, p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Epistola* LXXXVII, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Conciliorum oec. collectio*, VI, p. 194 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Both parties reached an agreement : the accusers agreed to abandon their charges, and Hībā agreed to forgive their conduct.

<sup>24</sup> Hībā had to agree publicly to anathematize Nestorios after his return to Edessa; he also had to agree to the appointment of an inspector to administer the financial affairs of the church of Edessa.

<sup>25</sup> Upon returning to Edessa, he found such an uproar that he was compelled to seek the protection of the military forces. Failing to obtain help from the military, he tried to escape. This also failed and he was arrested.

<sup>26</sup> The governor Chaeras was so terrorized by the troops of monks and nuns, assisted by their lay partisans, demanding the liquidation of Hībā 'and his Nestorian band', that he saw no other way out but to agree with the mob to discard the arrangements reached in Tyrus and initiate a new trial.

against him. This time they succeeded — Hībā was in their hands. He was tumultuously condemned <sup>27</sup> and imprisoned <sup>28</sup>.

Hībā's case was already predetermined in advance of the synod which convened at Ephesus in 449 A.D. What followed was the farce that has gone down in history as the 'Robber-Synod'. Accusations against Hībā were presented by the monks <sup>29</sup> and also by some members of the School of Edessa <sup>30</sup>. He was deposed <sup>31</sup>. Barṣaumā and his cohorts so intimidated the dissidents <sup>32</sup> and applied so much consolidated pressure that they won their victory. Nūnā was given the seat. Hībā himself was probably kept in prison <sup>33</sup>. Only a change in the political climate was able to rescue him from the hands of his ecclesiastical adversaries and grant him freedom <sup>34</sup>.

There is an intermezzo prior to the final curtain inaugurating the victory of the Monophysites. At the ninth session in Chalcedon in 451 A.D., after the decision was made to give the bishopric back to Theodoret, Hībā began to fight for his rights — and succeeded.

<sup>27</sup> He was given no chance to defend himself nor any opportunity to be present at his trial.

<sup>28</sup> He was arrested, dragged from one place to another, and imprisoned in Antioch, FACUNDUS, *Pro defensione*, VI, 1, col. 655 f.

<sup>29</sup> These were 12 abbots from his own diocese : Ja'qōb, Abraham, Eliā, Peqīdā, Ishāq, Eulōg, Habbib, Abraham, Ephrēm, Pōlūkrōn, Beniamin, and Andraos, *Akten. Ephes. Synode*, p. 12, 14; cf. p. 17, 19. Cf. also LIBERATUS, *Breviarium*, XII, col. 1004.

<sup>30</sup> The petition presented to the synod included the following subscription :  
 ܐܠܦܗܐܘܪܝܬܐ . ܟܠܡܐ ܡܬܐ ܟܠܝܢܐ . ܟܬܝܒܐ ܡܬܐ ܐܠܝܬܐ ܐܡܠܐܐ  
 ܟܠܝܬܐܘܐ ܟܠܝܬܐܘܐ ܟܠܝܬܝܬܐ ܡܠܐܬܐܘܐ ܟܠܠܐܡܝܬܐ . ܐܠܬܐܕܝܬܐ  
 ܟܠܠܐܡܝܬܐ ܡܠܠܐܘܐ ܟܠܬܐܘܐ 'all the clerics, abbots, monks, the *benai qeīāmā*, nobles, members of the council (of the town), the Romans, the schools of the Armenians, Persians and Syrians, craftsmen and the entire town have given their signature', *Akten. Ephes. Synode*, p. 24. This document presents an oblique picture of the situation. As certainly as the truth was twisted in regard to the clergy, so also in regard to the school. It shows however, that the school was not exclusively a center of the adherents of the Antiochian tenets at that time.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Πάντες οἱ εὐλαβέστατοι ἐπίσκοποι ἐβόησαν· Πᾶσαν Συρίαν Βαρσουμᾶς ἠφάνισεν· ἐπήγαγεν ἡμῖν χιλίους μονάζοντας, *Acta conciliorum oec.*, II, 1, 2, p. 116, nr. 78.

<sup>33</sup> This is not clear. However, we are told that Hībā was not seen for quite a long time, THEODORETOS, *Epistola*, CXXXII, col. 1349.

<sup>34</sup> The death of Emperor Theodosios in July 450.

He was declared orthodox with the power to oust Nūnā<sup>35</sup>. But the years on his regained seat, though the injustice to him was undone, were not propitious. His restitution and his activities could no longer change the course of affairs running against the cause of the adherents of Antiochian theology. Even the most optimistic champions by that time must have begun to realize that the strength of the ancient Syrian traditions, that of the Antiochian theology, was crumbling away. The Monophysites fortified themselves and moved on rapidly. Their movement had already penetrated Egypt, Palestine and Western Syria. The powerful tide was soon to engulf the rest of Syria and Osrhoene. It was a losing battle for the loyalists to the Antiochian tradition.

#### 6. THE SCHOOL OF EDESSA IN THE WHIRLWIND OF STRIFE

During these struggles and strifes, the School of Edessa had increasingly become the center of operations for the Antiochian theology<sup>1</sup>. As such, it had become the target for the adversaries. The hatred and contempt its enemies felt was quite understandable, since they perceived that the School of Edessa was the real heart of the Antiochian conviction and propaganda. It provided the movement with the theological ammunition in thought as well as in literature, furnished men to spread this propaganda, and supplied the inspiration and stimuli the battle needed.

It was regarded as a vital center also in the eyes of outsiders. One episode illustrates this point concretely. When the adherents of the Antiochian party were deeply disappointed and disturbed by the compromise made by Bishop John, and feeling that the cause of the movement was betrayed, we see to what star these men looked in the search for encouragement. Teachers in the School of Antioch, who were devout adherents of Diodor and Theodore, left Antioch and directed their steps towards Edessa.

Besides all the activities in which the members of the School

<sup>35</sup> *Acta conciliorum oec.*, II, 1, 3, p. 13 f.

<sup>1</sup> See page 24 ff.

of Edessa were involved<sup>2</sup>, it should particularly be noted that the greatest protagonist of the Antiochian theology, Bishop Hībā, was closely connected with the School of Edessa. He is reported to have kept these connections to the end: 'He was teaching continually orthodoxy and destroying the perversity until the hour of his death'<sup>3</sup>.

The signs had also become clear — to careful observers even earlier — that the days of the School of Edessa were numbered. Sooner or later, it, too, would have to capitulate. The teachers who remained faithful to Nestorios — who is incidentally the cleanest figure in this unholy display of power politics — must have felt that their positions were becoming increasingly precarious, surrounded as they were by the mounting menace of Monophysite sentiment. The gathering storm hung over their heads, threatening to swoop down and make them the targets.

The great champion of the Diophysite cause, Bishop Hībā, closed his eyes on October 28, 457 A.D.<sup>4</sup> His death put the position of the Diophysites in Osrhoene, and particularly that of the School of Edessa, in jeopardy. In fact, his demise removed one of the most important remaining pillars of the Antiochian cause from the scene. Besides Theodoret, he was the last of the leaders left in the Syriac speaking domain of the Byzantine provinces. The news of the passing away of this indomitable figure, defender of Antiochian tenets and patron of the School of Edessa ignited the signal for the Monophysite reaction.

The bishop's seat of Edessa was recaptured by the Monophysites, and this time decisively. Nūnā returned and this time he was able to hold it to the end of his life<sup>5</sup>.

For the School of Edessa, this change marks the beginning of a new phase in its existence, the worst in its history. Nevertheless, it had enough spiritual power to continue its existence under the altered circumstances. Whatever its hardships, difficulties and losses in teaching staff may have been, it remained in existence.

<sup>2</sup> See page 37.

<sup>3</sup> MEŠĪHĀZEKĀ, *Histoire* XVIII, p. 66; cf. JÖHANNĀN, *Eastern Saints*, X, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> Tešrī qadīm 28,769 A. Gr., *Chronicon Edessenum*, LXVIII, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8; cf. LXXI, *ibid.*, p. 8.

It required drastic action on the part of Nūnā's successor to liquidate it.

This finale did not occur until the year 489 A.D. <sup>6</sup>, under Qūrā <sup>7</sup> bishop of Edessa <sup>8</sup> who in the traditions of the Nestorians has been remembered as a man decorated with the epithets of contempt, like 'a deceitful worker', 'a rabid dog' and 'a doctor of falsehood' <sup>9</sup>. Even then, Qūrā had to move with the utmost caution and circumspection. He first secured a decree from the Emperor Zenon <sup>10</sup>. Armed with this order, he executed the maneuvers required to attain his ambition <sup>11</sup>. So completely did he carry this out that no trace was to remain. The physical plant itself was radically transformed in order to erase every vestige of the institution even to memory. On the spot the School of Edessa had occupied, a basilica dedicated to Mary was erected <sup>12</sup>. The cyclone had hit — devastatingly!

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXIII, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Qūrōs, in ΜΙΚΑ'ĒL, *Chronique*, IV, p. 249.

<sup>8</sup> He ruled from 471 till June 6, 498, *Chronicon Edessenum*, LXXI, LXXV, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Statutes*, Proem, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> ŠEM'ŌN OF BĒT ARŠAM, *Epistola*, p. 353.

<sup>11</sup> Ζήνων ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀντικαταστρέψας τὴν ἐν Ἐδέσσει τῶν Περσῶν καλουμένην διατριβὴν, ὡς τὰ Νεστορίου καὶ Θεοδώρου παραδιδούσαν διδασκαλίαν, ἠθέτησεν, THEODORES ANAGNOSTES, *Excerpta ex hist eccl.*, II, col.209.

<sup>12</sup> ŠEM'ŌN OF BĒT ARMŠA, *Epistola*, p. 353.

## THE FOUNDING OF THE SCHOOL OF NISIBIS

## 1. CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEM

The date the School of Nisibis was founded is shrouded in impenetrable darkness. No source has preserved any remembrance of the exact date. At best we can hazard an approximation. But this is contingent upon the resolution of an other problem — the departure of Narsai from the School of Edessa.

Unfortunately, the tradition devolving upon this historically important question is very much tangled. As a result, the scholars are divided about the time when the exodus of the teachers, students and others of Antiochian conviction and opinion left Edessa. Assemani proposed two events of expulsion, one about 431<sup>1</sup> and another in 489<sup>2</sup>, a view shared by Martin<sup>3</sup>. Duval<sup>4</sup> and Wright<sup>5</sup> accepted the year 489 for this event. When Chabot published the first study on this subject 68 years ago, he proposed the year 489 as the date<sup>6</sup>. Nöldeke<sup>7</sup>, Sachau<sup>8</sup>, Labourt<sup>9</sup> and Brockelmann<sup>10</sup> also adopted this date. A bit later Nelz writing his work on the schools in the Orient<sup>11</sup> came to the same conclusion. Among the more recent scholars Honigsmann has adopted the same date<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The expulsion under Rabbūlā he postulated on the basis of the report about his actions against the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

<sup>2</sup> 'Duplicam itaque existimo fuisse Persarum ex urbe Edessa ejectionem : alteram sub Rabula et Theodosio Imp. quum primum Nestorianismus publicari coepit : sub Cyro et Zenone Imp. alteram, quando etiam Edessena ejus gentis Schola eversa fuit', *Bibliotheca orientalis*, II, p. 402.

<sup>3</sup> *Histoire de la ponctuation*, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Histoire d'Édesse*, p. 432.

<sup>5</sup> *Syriac Literature*, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> *École de Nisibe*, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Syrische Grammatik*, p. XXXIII.

<sup>8</sup> *Poesie der Nestorianer*, p. 195.

<sup>9</sup> *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 138, 141.

<sup>10</sup> *Syrische Literatur*, p. 24; see also his *Aramäisch und Syrisch*, p. 155.

<sup>11</sup> *Theologische Schulen*, p. 79.

<sup>12</sup> *Naṣībīn*, p. 830.

A rival position shunts these proposals aside. Since Duval<sup>13</sup> adopted the position that this exodus took place in 457 A.D. Mingana<sup>14</sup>, Scher<sup>15</sup>, Baumstark<sup>16</sup>, Bardenhewer<sup>17</sup>, Hermann<sup>18</sup>, Hayes<sup>19</sup>, Tisserant<sup>20</sup>, Chabot<sup>21</sup> and Leclercq<sup>22</sup> followed suit. More recently also Bardy<sup>23</sup>, Ortiz de Urbina<sup>24</sup> and Spuler<sup>25</sup> have joined this group. These scholars insist that only those texts which have soberly discriminated the several events — without confusing them in the complicated history of the School of Edessa after Hībā's death, are historically reliable.

Some have placed the date of expulsion into still an earlier period, namely after the deposition of Hībā in 449/450<sup>26</sup>.

## 2. THE CONSTELLATION IN THE SOURCES

It is therefore requisite for us to examine all the available texts with the closest scrutiny possible. Our central concern is that of determining the most reliable tradition and its testimony about the matter at hand.

One important stratum among these texts stemming from the School of Nisibis, is presented to us by Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān<sup>1</sup>. Regretfully, this source passes over this question far too quickly,

<sup>13</sup> *Littérature syriaque*, p. 344, 346.

<sup>14</sup> NARSAI, *Homiliae et carmina*, I, Introduction, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Écrivains syriens*, p. 6. He was so certain in this that in BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 600, he wanted to correct the source in the interest of this view, see *ibid.*, p. 600, footnote 1, and p. 603, footnote 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 104; cf. *Syrische Literatur*, p. 179.

<sup>17</sup> *Geschichte altk. Literatur*, IV, p. 407.

<sup>18</sup> *Schule von Nisibis*, p. 115.

<sup>19</sup> *École d'Édesse*, p. 208, 214.

<sup>20</sup> *Narsai*, col. 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Littérature syriaque*, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> *École de Nisibe*, col. 1378.

<sup>23</sup> *Églises de Perse*, p. 326.

<sup>24</sup> *Patrologia syriaca*, p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> *Nestorianische Kirche*, p. 126; cf. *Nisibis*, col. 1499.

<sup>26</sup> DUCHESNE, *Histoire ancienne de l'Église*, III, p. 568.

<sup>1</sup> According to his own words he was a disciple of Ḥenānā and wrote his work at a time when he was the director of the School of Nisibis, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 392. This apparently took place before the troubles arose around Ḥenānā.

and in language far too lapidary. He makes some veiled insinuations that Narsai was compelled to leave the School of Edessa and to depart to Persia at the instigation of Satan<sup>2</sup>. Thus we have here no contribution toward the solution of our chronological question.

A second cycle of texts fills out this gap. But our problems are merely beginning. The texts of this second cycle represent two ramifications. Separate treatment is therefore necessitated.

According to one source, the blow which ended the School of Edessa struck soon after the death of Hibā. That is the tradition which has been linked with the Chronicle of Arbēl<sup>3</sup>. It testifies that when Hibā's eyelids closed in sleep, the fate of the School of Edessa was sealed. Narsai and his colleagues were expelled from Edessa : — 'But after his death the disciples of the fraud gathered, garnering strength and becoming able to expel all the Persian disciples from the town; and these went to their countries'<sup>4</sup>.

It must be admitted that the initial impression this source makes is favorable. No wonder that it has exercised such a wide influence! It is tempting to follow it. Indeed, such a presentation of the course of events advertises certain elements in a persuasive manner. When, upon the death of Hībā, Nūnā moved back to Edessa, such an act of revenge would appear to be understandable. It can well be imagined that demands to get at the roots of the trouble and to purge the School of Edessa of the Diophysite ferment became opportune. Given these circumstances, in the light of our severely limited knowledge, one may postulate the possibility that Bishop Nūnā undertook action against the school without delay. It could then have happened in the year 457. And if such an action took place, it must have involved the great majority of the teachers and students, who had under the leadership of Narsai been adherents of the Nestorian conviction. Indeed, it requires little to conclude that these teachers and students would be expelled without further ado, exiled from a place where their lot had already

become unbearable. To be sure, an operation demanding so much bloodletting involved grave risks for the activities of the school. However such a measure with all its consequences could be justified as a victory for the Monophysite cause. Nothing else mattered to those involved in the battle.

However, careful scrutiny notes serious difficulties with this view. If, indeed, the exodus of Narsai and his colleagues took place in 457, how can this claim of the Chronicle of Arbēl be reconciled with the historical fact that the School of Edessa must in reality have continued its existence and its spirit, and in such measure that it was a thorn in the flesh of the ecclesiastical group in power — and drastic steps, at a much later date, had to be taken to liquidate it? These steps were not carried out by Nūnā, but under his successor in 489<sup>5</sup>. Looking from this angle something seems to be out of order in the tradition of the Chronicle of Arbēl. Does it perhaps reveal symptoms of confusion in which echoes of the troubles and difficulties arising out of Nūnā's return have been mixed up<sup>6</sup> with the exodus of the Persian teachers and the final liquidation of the school?

Furthermore, there is something else that for the sake of circumsppection cannot be overlooked. It must be added that it is by no means certain that the usual interpretation catches the author's precise meaning. It is not absolutely certain how long a timespan is to be understood from the remark 'after his (i.e. Hībā's) death'. This phrase might refer in a general way to a longer period of time. This belongs to the realm of possibilities — if we take into account the fact that the rule of 'Abbušṭā, bishop of Arbēl<sup>7</sup>, in whose time this event is placed, ruled from about 450<sup>8</sup> till 498 according to chronological calculations<sup>9</sup>. Thus the event that took place long after Hībā's death, could be recorded in the way it

<sup>5</sup> *Chronicon Edessenum*, LXXIII, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Such a confusion of both dates appears for instance in Bar 'Ebrāiā, *Chronicon eccl.*, II, col. 77.

<sup>7</sup> MEŠIḤAZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XVIII, p. 65 ff.

<sup>8</sup> See SACHAU, *Chronik von Arbela*, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> He died one year after the synod held under the Catholicos Bābai in 498, MEŠIḤAZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XVIII, p. 68.

appears in our document, in the chapter devoted to Bishop 'Abbušā.

The second group of texts answers the chronological side of the question quite differently. This is the tradition which, in its earliest form, emerges in the letter of Šem'ōn of Bēt Aršam<sup>10</sup>. In the section which contains a historical exposé, Šem'ōn speaks of the hardships and difficulties that struck the School of Edessa after the death of Hībā. It goes on to say that the man who decided to resolve the situation, however radically, was Bishop Qūrā<sup>11</sup> — the man who succeeded Nūnā upon the latter's death. According to this account the expulsion of the teachers coincided with the liquidation of the school. Šem'ōn in addition to Narsai<sup>12</sup> enumerates other outstanding persons<sup>13</sup> who were compelled to leave the place together with their director.

Now it is time to examine Šem'ōn's report. For a critic, it is not difficult to detect some flaws in this account, and even signs of careless handling of data. Šem'ōn is certainly wrong when he tells us of the return of Baršaumā as a result of the action that took place in 489. This does not hold water. The truth is that Baršaumā must have left the School of Edessa and returned to Persia much earlier, where he had become bishop of Nisibis. The tradition that this took place as early as in the year 435<sup>14</sup> is certainly spun out of thin air since it is a fact that Baršaumā still was in Edessa in the year 449<sup>15</sup>. According to a marginal note added to the annalistic work of Eliā bar Šīnāiā, Baršaumā

<sup>10</sup> Known by his energetic propaganda for the Monophysite creed in the territory of the Sassanides. The chronological side of his life is obscure. The only point of departure is that since he is reported to have been elevated to the episcopate after a successful disputation with Catholicos Bābai, his ordination must fall into the period of Bābai's rule, i.e. between 497 and 502-503. See JŌHANNĀN OF EPHEsus, *Eastern Saints* X, p. 147 ff.

<sup>11</sup> *Epistola*, p. 353.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>13</sup> Aqāq of Bēt Arāmāiē, Baršaumā of Nisibis, Ma'nē of Bēt Hardāsir, Jōhannān of Karkā de-Bēt Sāri, Mīkā of Lāšōm, Paulē bar Qaqi of Karkā de-Ledān, Pūsi Hūzāiā and Abraham of Bēt Mādāiē, *ibid.*, p. 353 f.

<sup>14</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 520, fol. 41b; Ms. Vat. syr. 67, fol. 43a. The same appears in Ms. Vat. syr. 135, fol. 27a, according to which Baršaumā together with Narsai and Jazdad left Edessa under Rabbūlā.

<sup>15</sup> *Akten Ephes. Synode*, p. 26.



from isolation. That Mari supports the same tradition<sup>22</sup> may not mean very much. But when this testimony also occurs in the works of one who draws upon the traditions of the School of Nisibis, namely, Barḥadbešabbā of the School of Nisibis<sup>23</sup>, then it is not easy to push it aside as a free fabrication. He tells us that the man who instigated the clergy in Edessa to action against Narsai and his colleagues, compelling them to leave the school, was Bishop Qūrā<sup>24</sup>. He was the man who made life unbearable for Narsai. This is why Narsai had to abandon his work and leave<sup>25</sup>.

This is the situation in the tradition. Its contradictory voices are threatening to confuse us. In such a situation at least one recognition begins to dawn upon us. Confronted with such a contradictory state in our source, it is by no means certain that we have a right guide in following the Chronicle of Arbēl. And, indeed, as analysis shows, a circumspect approach in this intricate matter is more than justified.

Does this mean that we are now ready to fall into the arms of those who have maintained the year 489 as the date of Narsai's departure? We are not ready for this. This would be premature. The same circumspection which has guided the steps in our inquiry up to now should guide us also for the rest on our way of investigation.

### 3. SOLUTION OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEM

Reasons can be advanced to justify a negative attitude toward the rival tradition. But if our decision is to be based upon the factors considered up to this point, in the context of such a tangled situation we are less than eager to make any choice whatsoever. In order to advance, after sifting through all the contradictions and mixed statements, we must try to piece together those pieces of information which may with some confidence be adjudged historical. Only then can we be guided in our orientation.

Our hope that the sifting of all available traditions will yield

<sup>22</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 495; cf. page 00.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 599 ff.

<sup>25</sup> See page 40 f.

some items which bear upon our problem and carry some weight affecting our final estimate of the situation is not quite in vain.

First of all, Bishop Nūnā according to all indications did not belong to the extremists but seems to have represented moderate Cyrillian views<sup>1</sup>. If this indicates something of his general attitude — he was also primarily interested in practical Christian work<sup>2</sup> — we seem to gain the impression that conditions for the continuation of the existence of the School of Edessa were not yet unendurable. Secondly, this is the more so since the opposition, which under bishop Hibā belonged to the ruling party, still had some fire left within it. Capitulation could hardly have been won so quickly.

Thirdly, that we are on the right track is shown in the information about the situation under Nūnā's successor, Bishop Qūrā — the School of Edessa was still a hotbed in the propagation of the Antiochian theology. Among the letters of Ja'qōb of Serūg, there is one that informs us that the theology of the Antiochian luminaries was not only fostered in the school but infiltrated the Orient from that place. According to the data furnished by the author in the same document this was the situation that existed in the school around the year 470<sup>3</sup>. Doubts have been raised about the authenticity of this source<sup>4</sup>. But this information, in its essence, is not contingent upon the question of the authenticity, since the action of Bishop Qūrā reveals that he had compelling reasons to use drastic measures in liquidating the school.

Fourthly our critical attempt to remove what looks like varnish from the sources makes it seem more and more apparent that the points which have so impressed the scholars are in reality flaws. We note here particularly one tendency, that of stretching the number of years of Narsai's activity and to push them to phantastic limits. A cycle of texts has been painted with the same brush in this respect<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> VÖÖBUS, *History of the Gospel Text*, p. 72 f.

<sup>2</sup> In the tradition he lives forth not as a protagonist of dogmatic tenets but as a shepherd who had devoted himself to the foundation of establishments for the cult and charity and to works in the interest of the public welfare, like the building of bridges and roads. *Chronicon Edessenum*, LXVIII, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Written to the Mār Bassos Monastery, *Epistolae*, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> PEETERS, *Jacques de Saroug*, p. 157 ff.

<sup>5</sup> See page 46.

Fifthly, in regard to the chronology of Narsai's life, the only date which must be considered historically reliable is the year 496 A.D. As we shall see in the following chapter, in that year he was still director of the School of Nisibis. In itself, this fact makes it most unlikely that the exodus from Edessa could have happened in 457 A.D., antecedent to which Narsai was supposed to have been in office as director for a long period of time.

It is time to draw the threads of our inquiry together, to utilize our findings and to consider their bearing. We are thus able to provide a kind of framework of historical possibility within which the event in which we are interested, occurred. Our conclusions grow out of the ascertained facts. The return of Nūnā in 457 A.D. undoubtedly inaugurated a period of difficulty and hardship — perhaps even trial — for the staff of the School of Edessa. Nevertheless the work of the school was still carried forward. Whether this was possible without interruption and disruption, we do not know. However we do know that, under Qūrā, the school was still in existence, but life in it was made difficult then intolerable and finally, impossible. According to all we are able to judge the exodus of Narsai and his colleagues must have taken place at this time. We may therefore say that, by keeping away from the quicksands of certain traditions and adhering to the solid facts ascertained in the course of our inquiry, we emerge from legends into the light of history.

This much has been gleaned from history. It has somewhat clarified our outlook, however it is not enough for our purpose. It would be an advantage if we could invoke a criterion of judgement which would assist us in moving a step forward to shed more light upon the above-mentioned result. Fortunately, we do not stand before a stone wall. There is a pathway open to us.

The conclusion that the exodus of the Persian teachers from Edessa took place under Qūrā means that the terminus *post quem* for it would be 471 A.D., the year of Qūrā's enthronement<sup>6</sup>. This brings up the question — which proves to be fruitful — whether,

<sup>6</sup> In the year 782 A. Gr., *Chronicon Edessenum*, LXXI, p. 8; cf. *Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum*, I, p. 227.

in the case of Narsai, the corollary really is this : is the acceptance of the date of the liquidation of the school in 489 A.D. coincident with the date of Narsai's departure? This has been taken for granted by all who have followed this set of sources. But this should not be a matter of postulation but one of circumspect inquiry. Fortunately, our sources allow us to grapple with this matter at closer quarters.

We will do well, at this time, to concentrate our attention upon the texts which in fact are able to tell us something more about circumstances in connection with Narsai's departure. To broach the question, let us focus our searchlight upon the tradition preserved in the School of Nisibis. It is necessary to subject the report of Barḥadbešabbā to scrutiny<sup>7</sup>. This examination is most surprising — it opens up new and very fruitful perspectives. On the one hand, as the lengthy report now stands in the form of the presentation of our witness, all of it cannot be accepted at face value. The hand of dramatic execution and broadly extensive dialog reveal the imprint of fabrication to the critical eye. Certainly there is something in the scenery that is more colorful than factual. On the other hand, despite all the color, there is a residue of value. We are face to face with an amalgamated situation within which we detect an historical core<sup>8</sup>.

That which is presented and implied regarding the circumstances in connection with Narsai's departure from Edessa compels us to arrest our steps. This is something that, indeed, proves itself to be the factual substructure. Its character, as we shall see, is such that — there is no other way — it must be regarded as trustworthy. Intrinsically, it displays evidence of such a kind as to make any conclusion other than that of historical reliability impossible. About this, we can be absolutely certain. Moreover, insofar as we are enabled to control it by other criteria, it proves itself to be a tenet that comes from the tradition of the School of Nisibis that ultimately rests on Narsai himself. There is a document, very

<sup>7</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 599 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Defamation as presented here is something no one could have invented. About the apologetic means, see *Histoire*, II, p. 604 f.





to ridicule him to his friends as someone confused, arrogant and unbalanced, because he had left and fled secretly' <sup>23</sup>. It is further told that this mockery and ridicule had no little effect upon his friends. This in turn caused headaches also for Narsai <sup>24</sup>.

In the attempts we have tried to make, then, we note a real advance that leads to a break through the stalemate. The *mise-en-scène* of the departure of Narsai is set out with the utmost clearness. The plotting was directed against Narsai's person. This is confirmed in another source of the same provenance<sup>25</sup>. His departure was unexpected and precipitate. He left Edessa alone without his colleagues. This is also confirmed by another source that stems from the traditions of the school<sup>26</sup>. It seems that there is even a third independent access to the same traditions<sup>27</sup>.

The narrative continues in regard to Narsai's escape, that on the same night he was notified of imminent danger, he acted without delay<sup>28</sup>. This report contains some very vivid traits, particularly about the manner in which he found helpers and how he also managed to salvage his manuscripts : 'As he arrived at the church of the town, he found there Persians; he asked

<sup>23</sup> נח ונפשו שבתה כל אלה חסדו של משה : שמו חלוקתם  
 לחימה נח אמר : הלכנו בזה מוסר , משתומן , קני וחז'  
 וידענו , *ibid.*, p. 604<sup>s-7</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 504<sup>7-8</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 384.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 384.

وعند كونه بالرها كان يسب قورلوس فصعب ذلك على قوري أسفها<sup>27</sup>  
وعلى ساوري ويعقوب فاحتالوا في تلفه بأن يحرقوا قلايته وهو فيها  
فيتلف فاشعره بعض قسانهم ممن يجب الامانة الصحيحة باطنًا بذلك  
فهرب الى بعض الجزاير وقال حاكم حمص له منعه عندهم دعى

ἡ ἑκείνη ὥρα ‘as he was in Edessa he attacked Cyril; for this reason Bishop Qūrā, Severos and Ja’qōb became enraged and planned to destroy him by burning his cell when he was in it; he was informed by a certain one of his presbyters who loved the true faith in secrecy; in this way he fled to Mesopotamia; and he said (composed): ‘Our eyes, O Lord, are upon faith’, and ‘the Messiah who through His advent established peace’, MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> מִן הַלְּלוֹתָם וְהוֹדוֹתָם בְּחֶסֶד חַיִּים כִּי הָיוּ עוֹשֵׂים לְפָנָיו  
‘he rose hastily since it was getting dark, as he trusted the divine assistance, and he departed from there’, BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 603.



Even more can be taken into consideration. This hangs together with the tradition that correlates the outburst of the creative work of Narsai with that of Ja'qōb of Serūg, in an atmosphere of intense rivalry. It seems that there are elements in this tradition which were not taken out of thin air<sup>33</sup>, particularly if we take into account the fact that there is a tradition in which Narsai was not exalted as a creative fountain who in the sovereignty of his spirit set it in flowing but was made to share the honor of the genesis of his literary outburst with his theological adversary. There must be some reason for this. Looking at things from this aspect, there seems to be something which may be trusted. If so, then it conjures up the spiritual climate in the School of Edessa with its conflicting theological trends as the background of Narsai's inspiration. But such a situation would lead us into the third quarter of the fifth century<sup>34</sup>.

Our investigation has thrown light upon important historical questions in connection with the origin of the School of Nisibis. As a result two events must not be confused with one another : Narsai's departure from Edessa and the liquidation of the School of Edessa. Between them lies a longer period of time. When the last act in this drama around the School of Edessa took place ending in its liquidation, Narsai had already long been in Nisibis and looked back to a considerable period of activity as the director of the new School of Nisibis.

Regardless of the advance in our inquiry, of course, many questions still remain. And they will remain until new sources with more definite and indisputable data emerge.

#### 4. CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED TO THE FOUNDING OF THE SCHOOL

Pressure and hardship were the lot of the teachers of the Diophysite penchant at the School of Edessa during the last period of its history. This may have led to an intermittent withdrawal of some teachers before the final exodus. Throughout the time

<sup>33</sup> See page 65 ff.

<sup>34</sup> See page 68 f.



of previous discussions, predictable, and no longer surprising. That the line between historical truth and legend is often blurred, the tendency toward embellishment and refinement marked, is congruent with prior observation in other traditions. The two sources whose common root is the School of Nisibis exhibit traditions so affected. One of these stands under the spell of retouching the portrait and putting a halo upon the crown of the renowned teacher; the other wants the bishop of Nisibis to wear it. A closer examination of the expressions and accents in the narratives makes this manifest. A comparative analysis of the work of Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān <sup>4</sup>, and that of Barḥadbešabbā <sup>5</sup> puts all this in sharper relief.

Both sources report in detail about the circumstances preceding the birth of the new school. They say that Narsai crossed the Persian border, planning to journey into inner Persia, to find a place in which to settle and re-engage in teaching. In carrying out this design, he came to Nisibis, stopping off at the Monastery of the Persians <sup>6</sup>. He stayed here. It is then recorded that, when Barṣaumā, the bishop of Nisibis, learned of Narsai's presence at the monastery, he removed him therefrom, brought him into the city to the accompaniment of a reception of honor and laudation.

Now, we have been told this and that but clarity is absent. Not everything is to be trusted; stylistic influences have made inroads — and as a result the factual situation is blurred. A more realistic account is preserved elsewhere — a chapter in the Chronicle of Seert. It affirms that Narsai did not plan to journey beyond

<sup>4</sup> It is ostentatious that Narsai stands here in the shadow of the bishop of Nisibis. The description of Narsai's reception in Nisibis is very instructive. Here Barṣaumā after having heard of Narsai's arrival, did not go himself but sent his archdeacon and ordered him to bring Narsai into the town with great honor, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 384. Not less instructive is the report about the discussions on the project of the new school. Here the man of vision and initiative is Barṣaumā. Narsai hesitated first and did not know what to do so that it took efforts to persuade him, *ibid.*, p. 385.

<sup>5</sup> According to this account Barṣaumā sent some of his clerics and then he himself went out to meet Narsai and a magnificent reception was arranged in the church, *Histoire*, II, p. 506 f. The account of the negotiations depicts Narsai, after his initial hesitation, revealing the same insight as Barṣaumā, *ibid.*, p. 608.

<sup>6</sup> *ܡܢܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܢܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܢܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܢܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܢܚܝܬܐ* 'the Monastery of the Persians that is located from the East of the town', *ibid.*, p. 605a.7.

Nisibis — quite the contrary. Further, in seeking an opportunity to settle there, he was offered, and accepted, the leadership of a small school founded by a certain Šem'ōn. Later — after initial success? — Barṣaumā became interested and took matters into his own hands. This remarkable testimony is given in the following way : 'He (i.e. Narsai) fled to Nisibis and found there a little school, founded by Šem'ōn Garmqaiā<sup>7</sup>; there he settled down; Bishop Barṣaumā became interested in him and supported his cause'<sup>8</sup>. This report provides a hint that there was a more realistic pre-history. It seems to point to a modest beginning before plans were laid for a grandiose project. It also implies that the alleged and eulogized power of clairvoyance and vision on the part of Barṣaumā must be heavily reduced. It did not happen as suddenly as other sources want us to believe. This narrative in brief inspires more trust at several points than the somewhat puzzling handling of the question of the school of Šem'ōn in Barḥadbešabbā's account<sup>9</sup>.

However it may have been at the inception of the project, in any case the estimate of the situation was correct in recognizing the potential importance of the refugee director for the future of Nisibis and Christianity in Persia. The considerations for such a project appearing in our sources are certainly elaborated, but in substance they may well represent the actual judgement.

The fundamental considerations as related are, in retrospect, religious, pragmatic and church-political. Both sources in the tradition of the school agree on them in general, although the emphasis of each is different in detail. In the religious argument, Barṣaumā is depicted as a man who providentially grasped the meaning of the expulsion of Narsai<sup>10</sup>. This is most dubious. The pragmatic argument dwells upon the advantage of the location for a new school. It was regarded as excellent, indeed, unique in this respect

<sup>7</sup> The term means : somebody of Bēt Garmai.

<sup>8</sup> فهرب الى نصيبين ووجد هناك اسكولاً صغيراً كان شمعون الجومقاني نصبه. فاقام فيه واعتنى نه برصوما المطران واعانه على امره

*Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 114.

<sup>9</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 608.

<sup>10</sup> Referring to the work of the apostles among the Gentiles in preaching, baptism and instruction, BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 385.

being between two empires and thus promising a great future<sup>11</sup>. These calculations we can trust. No doubt the church-political aspect is historically founded. Certainly, one eye was kept on the theological and ecclesiastical development in Mesopotamia and the steady growth in strength of the Monophysites and the other upon the situation of the fellow-adherents of Antiochian tenets. Most interesting and instructive are the words put on the lips of the bishop of Nisibis : 'Even if it happens that the courageous fighters become conquered and have to flee from their adversaries, if they do not depart far but settle down at a close place, this is a sign of their victory and strength of their souls; likewise also with you: if you dwell here in the vicinity of Edessa, it is a sign of your victory and (a cause of) shame to your adversaries'<sup>12</sup>. It is also possible, quite apart from the outlook just expressed, that this situation in Osrhoene was still viewed with a spirit that refused to abandon some hope for the improvement and strengthening of the Diophysite forces<sup>13</sup>. From the perspective of the dogmatic battles, the choice of the site certainly could not have been better. A center of higher learning, appropriating the reputation of the School of Edessa, could become an asset in serving the cause of the Antiochian conviction even within Byzantine frontiers<sup>14</sup>. But we must reject the claim that ascribes all these insights only to Baršaumā. Narsai, who had been involved in this battle much

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 385<sub>8-9</sub>. See also BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 608. This text speaks of the advantage which this place had abounding in fruits, and so making it easy for the brothers to live there.

[illegible]

<sup>13</sup> מִי־נִי־אֲנִי לְכַלּוֹת הֶרֶס מִבְּרִית וְעַתָּה מִבְּרִית וְעַתָּה מִבְּרִית  
 . מִי־נִי־אֲנִי לְכַלּוֹת הֶרֶס מִבְּרִית וְעַתָּה מִבְּרִית וְעַתָּה מִבְּרִית  
 מִי־נִי־אֲנִי לְכַלּוֹת הֶרֶס מִבְּרִית וְעַתָּה מִבְּרִית וְעַתָּה מִבְּרִית  
 'especially since now the heresy begins to pound openly round about Mesopotamia, you  
 are for us a shield and a valiant soldier (lit. laborer); perhaps we can drive out the evil  
 from the midst (of the rivers = Mesopotamia)', BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*,  
 p. 385<sub>12</sub>-386<sub>1</sub>.

<sup>14</sup> As to that all these aspirations were not quite in vain, see some significant remarks in JÖHANNÄN, *Eastern Saints* X, p. 139.



of the first constituency of the school <sup>4</sup> putting both the reputation and the growth of the new school immediately upon a solid basis. The text leaves us with the clear impression that Baršaumā accomplished this task by reorganizing the educational work in Nisibis. We are told that an already existing school was merged with the new one. This other school had been in operation under the leadership of a certain Šem'ōn who was an interpreter of Kaškar <sup>5</sup>. It is regrettable that the author does not give us more than a casual remark. This fact is described in connection with the inauguration of the actual work in the new school : 'And because, since from previous time there was a school there, and an interpreter of Kaškar, whose name was Šem'ōn, a great and excellent man, there was no difficulty in this matter' <sup>6</sup>. This text indicates no more than that the body of this school became the bulk of the first assembly of the School of Nisibis. As we recall, another tradition characterized it as a small school <sup>7</sup>.

Finally Baršaumā undertook steps to foster the consolidation of life and discipline in the merged situation, namely by legislation. The rules which were set up by Narsai and his colleagues, and sanctioned by Baršaumā, are no longer extant. The sources we have consulted up to this point know nothing about the existence of these regulations. Information about this regimen comes to light only in those texts which are of legal character and emanate from the official channels of the administration of the School of Nisibis. These documents will be discussed later<sup>8</sup>.

## 6. THE COMMENCEMENT OF OPERATION

The planners faced no risks. While estimates and calculations for the success of an institution of this kind can seldom be based

<sup>4</sup> كُك 'brothers', *ibid.*, p. 609<sub>13</sub>.

<sup>5</sup> According to the Chronicle of Seert, *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 114, he was Šem'ōn Garmqai. It is very doubtful that this is the same Šem'ōn Garmqai to whom a Syriac version of Eusebios' Chronicle is ascribed, 'ΑΒΔΙΘΩ', *Catalogus librorum*, XCI, p. 168.

[illegible]

<sup>7</sup> See page 50.

<sup>8</sup> See page 90 ff.

on tangible factors, the new school was spared the test that every new school must pass to gain recognition. The newly founded institution was able to begin its operation vigorously from the very beginning and to chart its course directly towards its élan.

The School of Nisibis did not need a *stadium experimenti* before finding its appropriate shape and pattern in order to operate more effectively. Its image was already concrete; its shape and pattern already tested. The School of Nisibis was most fortunate that it could be organized according to the model of the Alma Mater in Edessa<sup>1</sup> being actually its replica<sup>2</sup>. All the traditions in teaching and administration acquired in Edessa, could immediately be put into effect here.

A second factor is equally important — the leaderships of the new school was put on the shoulders of Narsai. The beginning and the future of the new school were in firm and experienced hands. The sources amply affirm this<sup>3</sup>. Since his work in Edessa had been brought to nought, he must have seized the new opportunities with determination and zeal.

A third factor was that the bearers of the reputation and renown of the School of Edessa were concentrated in the new school. To them went the halo. Narsai's reputation, renown and fame was an inestimable asset which must have manifested itself very soon, attracting a considerable part of the staff of teachers, who had been Narsai's co-workers. This must have had its impact upon the pupils. Surely there was deep satisfaction in the thought that they were working in a place they could call their own. This had been computed in the calculations<sup>4</sup>.

In view of these advantageous factors, we can appreciate what the sources say about that first period, when the school began operating. Barḥadbešabbā summarizes it in the following way :

<sup>1</sup> Cf. SŪRĪN, *Mēmṛā de-abāhātā*, p. 400<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> In this respect the proem to the statutes speaks of the School of Nisibis as a transplantation of the school of Edessa into a new location, *Statutes*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 609.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 607<sup>14</sup>; BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 385<sup>10-11</sup>.



end of the chapter reminds us of the relationship between the two centers of learning : 'Edessa darkened and Nisibis brightened up' <sup>16</sup>. This, in the light of factual sources, is by no means a rhetorical flourish.

The establishment of the new school had far-reaching consequences for Nisibis. Owing to this event, light flared in this venerable center of Christianity in such a way that it created a nimbus of reputation for the town known henceforth as 'the intellectual town' and 'the mother of scholarship'.

<sup>16</sup> ܬܝܡܝܬܐ ܕܢܝܨܝܒܝܬ : ܬܝܡܝܬܐ ܕܝܕܥܐ *Fondation des écoles*, p. 386.

### III

## NARSAI

#### 1. NARSAI'S BACKGROUND AND PREPARATION

Narsai's cradle stood in 'Ain Dūlbā<sup>1</sup> in the country of Ma'altā<sup>2</sup>. For this, we have at our disposal a number of sources. But in regard to his youth and to the preparatory period of his life, we have to be satisfied with Barḥadbešabbā's words. A longer chapter, which has embedded within it a number of episodes about his home, education, growth and activities, is included in his historical work. But we cannot establish the criteria to use his information in the manner with which it should be used in criticism. Barḥadbešabbā does not bother to mention the source of his information.

When Narsai was 7 years old, he started his studies in the school<sup>3</sup>. He was an outstanding student and manifested extraordinary faculties and talents even as a boy. This was a period that fell on a time of persecution<sup>4</sup>. It is told that it broke out shortly after he had completed his preliminary studies in the Psalter within 9 months<sup>5</sup>. It threatened the existence of the school<sup>6</sup>, however, its teacher salvaged the situation : 'But this teacher, then, as he was strengthened by the grace of the Spirit, led the school and went to hide it in a mountain as those saints in the time of Elijah; and these true (believers) did not fear the sword, and they were

<sup>1</sup> BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 590.

<sup>2</sup> This village was at the foot of the mountains of Kurdistan.

<sup>3</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 594.

<sup>4</sup> It is reported that paganism raised its head against the truth and launched the persecution.

<sup>5</sup> ܟܠܝ ܕܠܝܬܝܢ 'shortly after this', *ibid.*, p. 594<sub>13</sub>.

<sup>6</sup> With regard to this school, the Magi determined to lead the children away from the Christian faith.



This man is reported to have come to Narsai's aid by affording him opportunities in the school of his monastery. He was given the task of teaching those entrusted to him the reading of manuscripts. He had spent a winter there carrying out his new duties, when the fame of the School of Edessa began to charm this gifted youth. And, indeed, his longings and dreams were materialized. His uncle, as we already learned, himself a pupil of the School of Edessa, knew the value of this investment. Besides, Narsai's yearning obviously suited his own plans — from Narsai's advanced study he expected a strengthening of the school in the Monastery of Kephār Mārī.

<sup>17</sup> Later he became a periodeut and finally bishop of Amid, *Histoire*, II, p. 596.

<sup>19</sup> An outstanding student and teacher, Ezaliā, was from the same monastery, ŠEM'ŌN OF BĒT ARŠAM, *Epistola*, p. 352.

[illegible]



his purported journey, together with Aqāq, to Theodulos<sup>25</sup> recorded in the Chronicle of Seert<sup>26</sup> and by Mari<sup>27</sup>. It looks very much like a cliché, a literary device to find a bearer for the prophetic forecast of Narsai's future. Certainly it was felt that a man of Narsai's stature requires such a figure in his life history.

## 2. DIRECTORSHIP IN EDESSA

Narsai's fondness for the School of Edessa is patent quite without the complicated stories given by Barḥadbešabbā. We can well understand why this center of learning was irresistible for him, and why he found himself at home here as he did nowhere else.

How long Narsai was at the School of Edessa we do not know. We have no idea about how long he was a student there nor any speculation at what time certain tasks were assigned to him in the school. This entire period is in the hardly visible background.

The identity of the director under whom his services were employed is also beset with complications. The tradition is divided and there is no hope of bringing order into this confusion. According to Barḥadbešabbā, the director under whom Narsai worked, was Rabbūlā<sup>1</sup>. Nor is this tradition an isolate one. It appears also in Mari<sup>2</sup>. Bishop Rabbūlā does not come into account for Barḥadbešabbā does not introduce Rabbūlā with the title of bishop<sup>3</sup> as we would expect, had Barḥadbešabbā had the 'tyrant' of Edessa in mind. According to Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān, the name of the director was Qīiōrē<sup>4</sup>.

It is impossible to unravel the situation. It may well be that this question is not an either-or choice at all. Perhaps we have here to do with the emergence of two leaders of the School of Edessa

<sup>25</sup> According to 'ABDIŠO', *Catalogus librorum*, XXXI, p. 37 Theodulos was a disciple of Theodore of Mopsuestia; there is a reference to him in *Doctrina patrum*, p. 315, and the acts of the synod of Lateran, *Conciliorum oec. collectio*, X, col. 1121.

<sup>26</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 114.

<sup>27</sup> Here Theodulos is portrayed as Diodor's disciple, *De patriarchis*, p. 44.

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 598.

<sup>2</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> ܪܒܒܐܝܢܐ 'and his name Rabbūlā'.

<sup>4</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 382 f.



spanning the various events in Narsai's life. All this in view of the paucity of indicators providing any help for chronological conclusions is simply too luxurious to be true. A network of such niceties cannot be taken seriously, and we have to look for other ways.

This does not mean, however, that there are no historical elements in the network of the relative chronology offered by the reports of both Barḥadbešabbās. We have reasons to think that, although the scheme does not deserve our trust, some components of it still may rest upon actual remembrance of the tradition. This is the maximum we can admit without violating any canon of historical research. Whether indeed the data about the length of Narsai's directorship in Edessa belong to the elements which may have a historical basis we cannot be so sure. But if the claim is true that Narsai was a director of the school for 20 years, as the tradition of the school has kept it<sup>11</sup>, then we would have a criterion for our chronological calculations. As we have seen Narsai's departure falls at the time somewhere after the year 471 A.D.<sup>12</sup> Therefore the responsibilities of the head of the school were laid upon his shoulders around 451 A.D. In any case, the election cannot have been taken place before that date.

For this clear evidence appears in the acts of the 'Robber Synod', a document which gives a picture of the bizarre events at a time before the year 449. Here light falls on the ecclesiastical conditions in Edessa and the struggle between the champions of the cause of the Antiochian theology and their adversaries<sup>13</sup>. We learn of many names of those engaged in dogmatic quarrels and excited activities, and in this way we learn about persons who stood in the forefront of the battle — but here Narsai's name does not appear at all. This fact cannot fail to have important bearing on the question under discussion.

For the entire period Narsai headed the School of Edessa our sources remain almost completely silent. The only compensation for this lack of information we have is in a statement in connection

<sup>11</sup> BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 599<sub>6-7</sub>; BARḤADBEŠABBĀ OF ḤOLWĀN, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 383<sub>13-14</sub>.

<sup>12</sup> See page 41 ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Akten Ephes. Synode*, p. 8 ff.





Narsai also in Mari's witness. His account runs : 'As he was in Edessa, he attacked Cyril; for this reason Bishop Qūrā, Severos<sup>2</sup> and Ja'qōb became enraged and planned to destroy him'<sup>3</sup>. These traditions set the stage over against which the outburst of literary creativity by Narsai appears in a most interesting light. This is an outlook which encourages us to take a closer look at these circumstances.

Good fortune allows us to trace this thread a good deal farther back. We are particularly fortunate that, in this question, Barḥadbešabbā comes to our aid. He must have regarded this matter as too important to be overlooked. Amid the flattery he bestows on the 'Harp of the Holy Spirit'<sup>4</sup>, there is a section<sup>5</sup> which sets us on guard<sup>6</sup>. All it says adds weight to the question under discussion. It is the more valuable since it does not only lead us back into more ancient traditions but offers us an advantage in laying bare new aspects.

First, Barḥadbešabbā tells us about the situation of conflict which involved Narsai in his controversy with Ja'qōb of Serūg<sup>7</sup>. Secondly, he makes a remark about the deeper causes of this particular theological rivalry. Ja'qōb was an unusual and particularly dangerous person in the eyes of the men of the Antiochian conviction since he employed his gift for the *mēmre*-creation as a means for the propagation of his theological tenets : 'The *mēmre* which he composed in order that through a pleasant composition of exciting expressions he could snatch the mass from the illus-

<sup>2</sup> Obviously this is a reference to the Severos who later became the patriarch of Antioch. Personally he was not a member of the School of Edessa and as far as we are informed he was not personally active in Edessa. He attended the schools in Alexandria and Berytos, ZACHARIAS RHETOR, *Vie de Sévère*, p. 11 ff.; JŌḤANNĀN BAR APTŌNĪĀ, *Vie de Sévère*, p. 217 ff.

<sup>3</sup> وعند كونه بالروها كان يسب قورلوس فصعب ذلك على قيوري  
 اسقفها وعلى ساوري ويعقوب فاحتالوا في تلفه *De patriarchis*, p. 44<sup>14-16</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 611.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 612.

<sup>6</sup> Here this account does not appear in the section which describes Narsai's stay and activities in Edessa, but is placed into a section dealing with the difficulties he had to experience.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 612<sup>2-4</sup>.

trious one'<sup>8</sup>. What is said here conjures up an atmosphere of the closest contact, however abrasive, between Narsai and Ja'qōb and their respective adherents. Their activities involved them in an intense recruitment propaganda.

This leads to the third aspect, the reaction which is most instructive. In this statement, indeed, every element counts : 'What, then, did the elect of God do? He did not turn away from this but did as the word of the Psalmist who said : « With the elect you will be elected and with the crooked you will be crooked », he put the truthful thought of orthodoxy into the elaborate form of the *mēm̄rē* to pleasant melodies and he composed the sense of the Scriptures according to the holy fathers, in pleasant responses in the likeness of the blessed David'<sup>9</sup>.

What we can learn from this witness is highly interesting. Whatever we may think of some of the formulations in this statement, the bare truth is that Narsai had received impulses and fruitful stimuli for his literary creation from Ja'qōb of Serūg. Such a tradition, taken intrinsically, exhibits that kind of character which commands our full trust and confidence. The admirers of Narsai in the Nestorian fold would never have concocted something like this. Historical reasons must have been compelling to preserve it. Whereas we have come to expect a different handling of situations, namely some glorification of the hero at the expense of historical truth, this tradition on the contrary bears the mark of genuineness. Here we certainly stand on solid historical ground.

Such avenues make us the more attentive to the literary creation of both men. If we make an attempt to approach them from this vantage point — covering the material which we have enough at our fingertips — interesting features begin to emerge. There, indeed, appears to be a kinship in the setting of the subjects,

והנהגות ודבית וכו' והנהגות מוסדות וקולל משפחתך חזק למ<sup>8</sup>  
ibid., p. 612-5. להנהגות מוסדות ומוסדות

[illegible]

themes, topics and leitmotives which deserves looking at in depth. The echo of the strife sounds forth most clearly in their handling of these issues in which all the theological differences were crystallized — in the estimate of the pillars of the Antiochian theology. Ja'qōb of Serūg presses hard in support of the condemnation of Diodor, Theodore, Nestorios and Theodoret and depicts these authorities as prime examples of the perversion of theological thinking<sup>10</sup>. From Narsai on the contrary, there is a *mēmṛā* devoted to the pillars — Diodor, Theodore and Nestorios, a eulogy of the galaxy in the theological sky<sup>11</sup>.

Such an atmosphere, however tense and painful for the participants, but fruitful for literary work, can also to a certain extent be placed into a chronological frame. About the literary work of Ja'qōb of Serūg, who also was in the School of Edessa<sup>12</sup>, we have some information. It is reported that he had inaugurated his career as a poet very early — at the time he was passing from his youth to the threshold of manhood. One episode, in connection with the *mēmṛā* on the vision of Ezechiel, is placed at a time when he was only 22 years old. This is related by his disciple Georgios<sup>13</sup> and by an anonymous biographer<sup>14</sup>. Since Ja'qōb died in 521 A.D. past 70 years of age<sup>15</sup> his poetical career<sup>16</sup> must have started before the year 470 A.D. Thus, according to the memory of the tradition, the spirit of inspiration began to flow in a different way and form at the time Narsai stood in the best years of manhood able to look back to a long period in the office of directorship.

This information prompts us to conclude that such new stimuli have fructified Narsai's literary production near the end of his career in Edessa. These must have been the last years of his long

<sup>10</sup> *Epistolae*, p. 58 ff.

<sup>11</sup> *Homélie sur les docteurs*, p. 505 f.

<sup>12</sup> *Epistolae*, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> *Vita Jacobi*, p. 000.

<sup>14</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,174, fol. 285a; *Vitae Jacobi compendium*, p. 289; cf. *De Jacobo*, p. 830 f.

<sup>15</sup> Ja'qōb was 67 years old when he was elevated to the episcopate in 519, *Vitae Jacobi compendium*, p. 289; in the episcopate he could stay only for 2 1/2 years and died in November 521, *Chronicon anonymum ad ann. 819*, p. 8. Another tradition places his death in the year 522, ELIĀ BAR ŠINĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, I, p. 118.

<sup>16</sup> See VÖÖBUS, *Handschriftliche Überlieferung*, part I.

stay there, but they must also have been years of such intense activity that they set the course not only for the time when Narsai himself had to disappear from the stage but also, finally, the school itself.

In this way then the background of the literary production of Narsai comes into a somewhat clearer and less ambiguous light.

#### 4. NARSAI'S LITERARY CREATION

##### a. Introduction

We come closer to Narsai through his literary creation. Through his writings a master speaks to us, who belongs to the few of the most eminent who have reached the zenith of producing elegance of style in Syriac and writing what were to become the recognized classics in the Syriac literature.

It is obvious that the traditions about Narsai's accomplishments in this area must come under criticism. While Mari remains silent on this point<sup>1</sup>, the Chronicle of Seert claims that Narsai wrote commentaries on many Old Testament books<sup>2</sup>. This information is certainly dependent upon 'Abdišō' who registered the following in his history of literature : commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri, Joshua, Judges, Kohelet, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezechiel, Daniel and the Twelve Prophets<sup>3</sup>. But let us not be too impressed by this list. In assessing the value of this list of exegetical works, it is wise to receive the counsel of authors, who wrote about half a millennium earlier. Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān — who does not neglect data about the literary creation — says that Narsai produced many homilies and other works, but he is silent about any commentaries<sup>4</sup>. The same is true of Barḥadbešabbā, though he is more talkative and tells us more about Narsai's works<sup>5</sup>. This silence is most conspicuous. The more so, because both authors in discussing the literary creation of Narsai's successors, explicitly

<sup>1</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LIII, p. 63 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 386.

<sup>5</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 612.

name the commentaries on the biblical books. Consequently no other explanation is possible than this — these earliest witnesses had not heard anything about the existence of such commentaries and these were men who certainly possessed knowledge about these things. In their picture, Narsai was wanting this genre of literary work which others nurtured. Such a literary portrait is explicable only if it is historical, since neither author would have handled an image of Narsai's stature highhandedly.

An analysis of the exegetical traditions confirms the soundness of this conclusion. The fact comes out that Narsai did not belong to the authorities upon whose shoulders the traditions of the exegesis among the East Syrians rest. The testimony given in a repertory of East Syrian exegesis<sup>6</sup> as well as in the *Gannat būssāmē*<sup>7</sup> is clear. Narsai is alleged to have composed a commentary on the Twelve Prophets. However, Narsai's name does not appear even once in documents<sup>8</sup> which quote the older hermeneutic traditions on these biblical books.

Some references which emerge in exegetical literature could easily have been taken from Narsai's *mēmvrē* on biblical subjects. In fact, those which appear in connection with Genesis<sup>9</sup> and the other books of the Old Testament<sup>10</sup> in ʾĪšō'dād of Merv, are easily recognized as having been taken from the *mēmvrē* which have survived. At least in one instance, it is explicitly stated that the reference was not taken from a commentary but from a *mēmvrā* whose *incipit*

<sup>6</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 87a, brings only one reference to Narsai while there are many references to other authorities belonging to the traditions of the School of Nisibis. In Ms. Bagd. 112, which contains a commentary on the Ketubim, cf. fol. 240b ff., Narsai's name is not mentioned at all.

The commentary preserved in Ms. Ming. syr. 553 has sometimes been ascribed to Sabrišō' bar Paulos, see BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 290. Sabrišō' was about 1188-9 a teacher in the Monastery of Mika'el near Mošūl. Its earliest text in Ms. Seert 21 (1605) is lost. Ms. Alqōš 34 is a copy of it and this is the base for Ms. Ming syr. 553. The earliest text is in Ms. Kerk. 8, cah. 1, fol. 1a - cah. 23, fol. 3a.

<sup>7</sup> Ms. Bagd. B does not offer a single reference to Narsai; cf. also Ms. Manch. Ryl. syr. 41; Ms. Berl. orient, quart 870; Ms. Alqōš 49 and Ms. Vat. syr. 494.

<sup>8</sup> This is so in Ms. Bagd. 113 which contains a commentary on the Twelve Prophets as well as on Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezechiel, cf. fol. 270b ff. The same is the situation in the commentary of ʾĪšō'dād of Merv, cf. *Commentare zu Hosea* etc., p. LVI f.

<sup>9</sup> *Commentaires*, I : *Genèse*, p. 26 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 4524, fol. 84a on Leviticus and fol. 128b on Samuel.

This accumulated evidence is sufficient for us to realize that traditions regarding Narsai's literary work have grown without proper control. Therefore it is necessary to reduce the range of Narsai's literary creation to its proper proportions.

Narsai's title 'the Harp of the (Holy) Spirit' shows where his strength lay — in the genre of didactic poetry, cast in seven and twelve syllable meter. This gift he unfolded before the eyes of his amazed contemporaries. He expressed himself with a richness seldom seen. It seemed marvellous. Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān tells us that the number of the *mēm̄rē* totalled more than 300<sup>15</sup>. The other Barḥadbešabbā claims there were as many *mēm̄rē* as the year has days<sup>16</sup>. A supplementary remark informs us how these were arranged: 'And he divided them into 12 volumes so that every one of them had two «prophets», all of them having 24 prophets'<sup>17</sup>. Here the term 'prophets' clearly refers to a section in each volume.

<sup>12</sup> Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 15, fol. 4b says this explicitly that the quotation is taken from one of Narsai's *mēmre*.

<sup>14</sup> *מבוא למחשבת ישראל*, חלק א' פרק י"ב, עמ' 10. *Histoire*, II, p. 612<sup>9-10</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 612<sub>10</sub>.

<sup>17</sup> נפלא קצת זה חשבון פשוט. וכל שכן חשבון מסומן זה *ibid.*, p. 612.  
חשבון מסומן חסר

What has survived destruction are parts of collections of various size<sup>18</sup>, which obviously were arranged within the framework of the church year and oriented according to the liturgical traditions. Their attestation is good on internal grounds. Besides their characteristic form of expression and style as well as their dense and disciplined structure, the author has occasionally provided us even with some clues of a general chronological nature<sup>19</sup>.

The genre of the *mēm̄rā* was used by Narsai as a literary device to provide a uniform mold for all his literary work. Nevertheless the mantle of religious lyric spans a number of fields which he has fructuated.

The great majority of the *mēm̄rē* reveal that Narsai's heart found its pleasure in the sphere of practical religiosity. Here his thematic is multifarious, drawn from biblical figures, stories and sayings or from the vast deposit of the Christian truth or from the store-house of Christian life. But its orchestration is the same — the movement in the direction of edification leads always to a rising crescendo.

When we scan Narsai's literary creation it is evident that certain features of his literary interest are so conspicuously presented in the body of his *mēm̄rē* that they especially deserve adumbration. Not only is a closer glimpse of Narsai as a man and as an author thus afforded but also a glance into that which was prompted by and arose out of needs of instruction in the school.

## b. Biblical tradition

Most of Narsai's literary creation grew out of the world of the

<sup>18</sup> The collections of the *mēm̄rē* are of various sizes. The largest collection in Ms. Alqōš 160 and 161 contains 70 *mēm̄rē* (28 and 42 respectively). Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463 has the same number. Next to this is Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9367 and 9368 with 64 *mēm̄rē* (36 and 28 respectively). After these come : Ms. Bagd. 603, part I-IV : 51 *mēm̄rē*; Ms. Bagd. 605 : 38 *mēm̄rē*; Ms. Ming. syr. 55 : 37 *mēm̄rē*; Ms. Borg. syr. 79 : 33 *mēm̄rē*; Ms. Borg. syr. 83 : 23 *mēm̄rē*; Ms. Bagd. 601 : 31 *mēm̄rē*; Ms. Bagd. 602 : 25 *mēm̄rē*; Ms. Berl. Sach. 174(-176) : 25 *mēm̄rē*; Ms. Vat. syr. 588 : 20 *mēm̄rē*; Ms. Vat. syr. 594 : 17 *mēm̄rē*. Other collections are smaller. A codex which was sent from Mossul to G. Diettrich for examination, contained 35 *mēm̄rē*, DIETRICH, *Bericht*, p. 191 f., and another manuscript 25 *mēm̄rē* of Narsai, *ibid.*, p. 193 ff.

<sup>19</sup> In several places the author says that Christianity has been in existence for about 500 years, *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 305, 308; II, p. 120.

Bible. Its many areas of thought provoked the occasions for literary meditation. He focussed upon these inexhaustible sources of illumination and inspiration again and again.

Narsai found no joy and satisfaction in treating passages. Seldom did he choose to do so. The first words of the Bible constitute an exception<sup>20</sup>. So, too, in the *mēmṛē* dealing with New Testament subjects. A passage which was thrown into the doctrinal battles and thus subjected to controversy (namely, 'The Word became flesh') is another exception<sup>21</sup>. This fact is very instructive. It reveals the author's mind. It was not philosophic, speculative or resourceful in scrutiny but practical. He needed greater blocks of themes and topics more elastic and profitable for his didactic interests.

An enumeration along general broad lines provides us with an idea of the character of that part of his literary creation which is quantitatively the most representative. The inspiration which moved Narsai in the Old Testament first of all has its roots in the records regarding origins in the light of the Bible such as the creation of the world<sup>22</sup> — a theme to which he returns more than once and treats in various ways<sup>23</sup> — the creation of angels<sup>24</sup>, and the creation of the progenitors<sup>25</sup>. Other themes of great dramatic power, such as the tower of Babel<sup>26</sup> are excised from biblical history and the diluvium<sup>27</sup>. The history of the patriarchs provided the thematics for a number of *mēmṛē*, especially on

<sup>20</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 168 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, part II, fol. 92b-98a; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 92b-98a; Ms. Vat. 594, fol. 66b-90a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 340a-343a; Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 107a-112a.

<sup>22</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 180 ff.

<sup>23</sup> See also page 77.

<sup>24</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 207 ff.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 100 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 347b-357b; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 308b-318b; Ms. Vat. syr. 588, fol. 90a-95a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 257a-262a.

<sup>27</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, part II, fol. 66a-74b; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 66a-74b; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 61b-66b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 92a-97b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9367, fol. 63b-72a; Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 58a-66a.

Joseph<sup>28</sup>, David and Saul<sup>29</sup> and Solomon<sup>30</sup>. In addition other personalities, like Samson<sup>31</sup> and Job<sup>32</sup> were subjects of his meditation.

Themes which put additional fervor and rhythm into his poetry were elaborated by Narsai on the basis of the religious experiences recorded in the biblical books. This is visible in the *mēmṛā* on the benediction of Noah<sup>33</sup>, the miracles of Moses<sup>34</sup>, the brazen serpent in the desert<sup>35</sup>, and the miraculous rescue of Anania, Azaria and Misael<sup>36</sup>. Similar in kind are the *mēmṛē* which deal with visionary and ecstatic themes such as the Seraphim in the vision of Isaiah<sup>37</sup> and the elevation of Henoch and Elia<sup>38</sup>.

A still larger number of the *mēmṛē* which handle the topics taken from the life of Jesus, lead the others. Most outstanding among them are the *mēmṛē* on the birth of Jesus<sup>39</sup>. His temptation<sup>40</sup>, treated in more than one *mēmṛā*<sup>41</sup>, the beginning of the *via dolorosa* with the entry into Jerusalem<sup>42</sup>, the machinations of the Jews<sup>43</sup>, and the themes in connection with the happenings

<sup>28</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 265 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 365a-375b; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 326a-336b; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 1b-7a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 270a-275b.

<sup>30</sup> Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 375b-383a; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 336b-344a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 7a-10b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 275b-279a.

<sup>31</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 303 ff.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 254 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 339a-347b; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 300a-308b; Ms. Vat. syr. 588, fol. 86a-90a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 253a-257a.

<sup>34</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 288 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, part II, fol. 78a-86a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 52a-56a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 199b-203b; Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 204a-211a.

<sup>36</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 314 ff.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 131 ff.

<sup>38</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, part II, fol. 55a-66a; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 55a-66a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 23b-29a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 247b-253a; Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 48a-58a.

<sup>39</sup> See page 78.

<sup>40</sup> See page 78.

<sup>41</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 132a-139b; Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 127a-140a; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 147a-158a; Ms. Alqōš 160, fol. 134b-144a; Ms. Borg. syr. 79, fol. 117a-125b; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 99a-107a.

<sup>42</sup> See page 78.

<sup>43</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 299 ff.

related to the last week, particularly one *mēmṛā* on the washing of the feet <sup>44</sup>.

Other gospel stories play a subordinate rôle. To the *mēmṛā* on the Syro-Phoenician woman <sup>45</sup>, hardly any other are to be added. The same is true regarding the miracle stories. There is only one, the *mēmṛā* on the resurrection of Lazarus <sup>46</sup>.

Quite different is the place of the parables in the *mēmṛā* creation of Narsai. There is a cycle devoted to the treatment of the parabolic themes of the gospels. Five of these have survived, i.e. the Prodigal Son <sup>47</sup>, the Ten Virgins <sup>48</sup>, the Laborers in the Vineyard <sup>49</sup>, Rich Man and Poor Lazarus <sup>50</sup> and the Zizania <sup>51</sup>.

Events in the history of the salvation have given rise to various *mēmṛē*, among which the most outstanding are those on the Resurrection <sup>52</sup>, the Ascension <sup>53</sup> and Pentecost <sup>54</sup>.

With these *mēmṛē* is associated another cycle. To be sure it represents a variety but the common denominator lies in the fact that these *mēmṛē* have arisen out of reflection upon the persons in the gospel tradition. Among the preserved material are the *mēmṛē* which deal with John the Baptist <sup>55</sup>, Stephen, the first

<sup>44</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 172a-182b; Ms. Bagd. 603, part III, fol. 17a-30a; Ms. Vat. syr. 588, fol. 70a-76a; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 227b-236a.

<sup>45</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, part IV, fol. 59b-68a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 57b-61b.

<sup>46</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 111a-120a; Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 142a-151a; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 160a-171a; Ms. Alqōš 160, fol. 146b-156a; Ms. Borg. syr. 79, fol. 127b-136a; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 109a-116b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 112a-117a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 142a-151b.

<sup>47</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 144b-152b; Ms. Bagd. 603, fol. 31b-40b; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 224b-234a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 14a-18b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9367, fol. 233a-241a; Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 168a-175a.

<sup>48</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 243 ff.

<sup>49</sup> This parable has been used in connection with the commemoration of the apostles, see page 78.

<sup>50</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 84 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 372a-378b; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 10b-14a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 336a-339b.

<sup>52</sup> See page 78.

<sup>53</sup> See page 78.

<sup>54</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 72ff.

<sup>55</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 61a-69b; Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 68a-77b; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 76a-86b; Ms. Alqōš 160, fol. 72a-81b; Ms. Vat. syr. 498, fol. 77a-87a; Ms. Vat. syr. 588, fol. 17a-22a; Ms. Borg. syr. 79, fol. 61a-69b; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 50b-57b; Ms. Berl. Sach. 174, fol. 73a-85a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 37b-43b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 68a-77b.

martyr <sup>56</sup>, the four evangelists and apostles <sup>57</sup> and above all the *mēmṛā* on the chief apostles, Peter and Paul <sup>58</sup>. One *mēmṛā* is dedicated to Mary <sup>59</sup>.

Besides their character as a literary creation, the *mēmṛē* also have their significance in giving us some idea of the nature of the teaching Narsai provided at the school. For at least a part of this material was created to meet the needs of his teaching obligations. In this respect, they help to give us an insight into that which Narsai could have offered in the class-room situation.

### c. Christian Kerygma

Interest in the Christian Kerygma has provided themes for a number of the *mēmṛē*. Various truths of the Christian proclamation have been set into verses. It is obvious that a spirit speaks to us through these verses which found itself in its element in pondering over these issues, so vital for the nourishment of Christian faith and the promotion of the Christian life. Some samples suffice to give us an idea of the character of this segment. The themes span a wide range : the creation of the universe <sup>60</sup>, the creation of the angels <sup>61</sup>, their function <sup>62</sup>, the church and the ministry <sup>63</sup>, the condition of the dead, where he moves in the stream of the ancient

<sup>56</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 90 ff.

<sup>57</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 81a-89a; Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 92a-100b; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 103b-113a; Ms. Alqōš 160, fol. 96a-104b; Ms. Vat. syr. 498, fol. 102b-112a; Ms. Vat. syr. 588, fol. 22a-27a; Ms. Borg. syr. 79, fol. 82b-90a; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 69a-75b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 51a-55a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 92a-100b; Ms. Berl. Sach. 174, fol. 98b-107a.

<sup>58</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 68 ff.

<sup>59</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 44a-56b; Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 45a-54b; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 48a-58b; Ms. Alqōš 160, fol. 47b-58a; Ms. Vat. syr. 498, fol. 51b-62b; Ms. Vat. syr. 588, fol. 6a-11b; Ms. Borg. syr. 79, fol. 39a-48b; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 36b-44a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 26b-32a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 45a-54b; Ms. Berl. Sach. 174, fol. 48b-60b.

<sup>60</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 180 ff. There is another *mēmṛā* on the same theme, *ibid.*, II, p. 193 ff.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 207 ff.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 222 ff.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 144 ff.

Syrian beliefs regarding the sleep of the soul <sup>64</sup>, the Antichrist <sup>65</sup> and the Parousia of Christ <sup>66</sup>.

#### d. Exegesis

Another area of interest appears in the *mēmre* that treat the biblical texts in a more systematic, methodical and scholarly fashion. For us these texts have a particular significance. It is here that we have before us texts which allow a better look into the lecture-room and the instruction that took place there. What we have already seen in materials of a more homiletical character finds its important corrective in materials of a more hermeneutic nature.

It is highly interesting to find a cycle among the many *mēmre* which deals more or less freely with the biblical episodes and narratives. This is a genre which attracts our special attention. Its most interesting exponent is a *mēmra* entitled: 'On the Creation of Adam and Eve and on the Transgression of the Commandment' <sup>67</sup>. It actually presents a commentary of a section of Genesis <sup>68</sup>. Though using poetic form, Narsai here enters the terrain of biblical exegesis, giving an interpretation of the running text step by step.

Another *mēmra* under the title: 'On the Creation of the World' <sup>69</sup> further illustrates Narsai's method of biblical exegesis. The greater part of the text embedded in this *mēmra* is actually a commentary upon the third chapter of Genesis.

#### e. Cult and liturgy

One aspect of this practical religious interest cannot be passed by in silence, namely the cultic aspect that constitutes a considerable part of his creation. It comes to the fore in more than one genre.

One cycle of the *mēmre* constitutes a special category. It centers

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 238 ff.

<sup>65</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, part III, fol. 64b-78a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 45a-52a; Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 272a-288a.

<sup>66</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 1 ff.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 100 ff.

<sup>68</sup> Chapter II, 7 to IV, 17.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 193 ff.

around the church year. These *mēmnrē* speak of the inspiration Narsai drew from his desire to elucidate the meaning of the feast-days to which special significance was attached by the gathering of the worshipping community. Here it is appropriate for us to remember that a discipline dealing with this subject was in process of development in the curriculum of the school <sup>70</sup>.

These *mēmnrē* involve first of all the feasts upon which the structure of the church year rests: the Nativity <sup>71</sup>, Epiphany <sup>72</sup>, Palmarum <sup>73</sup>, Easter <sup>74</sup>, Ascension <sup>75</sup> and the Pentecost <sup>76</sup>. Other special gatherings provided themes for the *mēmnrē* which supplement the cycle. The most outstanding are the commemoration days which in importance were hardly less popular and estimable. Of these the *mēmnrā* on the commemoration of the Apostles <sup>77</sup>, that of the confessors <sup>78</sup> and especially that of the martyrs <sup>79</sup> stand in the front rank. The last theme has found repeated treatment <sup>80</sup>. To

<sup>70</sup> See page 104.

<sup>71</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 38a-41b; Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 34a-43a; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 35b-45b; Ms. Alqōš, 160, fol. 37a-46a; Ms. Borg. syr. 79, fol. 29b-37b; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 27b-34b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 21a-26b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 34a-43a; Ms. Berl. Sach. 174, fol. 37a-48a.

<sup>72</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 56b-66a; Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 57a-66b; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 62b-73b; Ms. Alqōš 160, fol. 60a-69b; Ms. Borg. syr. 79, fol. 50b-60b; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 46a-48b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 32a-37b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 56b-66b; Ms. Berl. Sach. 174, fol. 61a-70b.

<sup>73</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, fol. 128b-134a; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 128b-133a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 70a-73a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 117a-120a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9367, fol. 159a-164a; Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 163a-168a.

<sup>74</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 208a-214b; Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 197b-204a; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 225a-232b; Ms. Alqōš 160, fol. 204b-211b; Ms. Borg. syr. 79, fol. 178b-184b; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 157a-162b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 164b-168b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 198a-204b; Ms. Berl. Sach. 174, fol. 208b-217a.

<sup>75</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 238b-244b; Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 224b-231b; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 257a-265a; Ms. Alqōš 160, fol. 233a-240a; Ms. Borg. syr. 79, fol. 203b-210a; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 181b-187b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 186b-190b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 227b-235a; Ms. Berl. Sach. 174, fol. 239b-246b.

<sup>76</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 72 ff.

<sup>77</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, part III, fol. 54a-64b; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 40a-45b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 330b-336a.

<sup>78</sup> See page 84.

<sup>79</sup> See page 84.

<sup>80</sup> See page 84 f.

these attaches also a *mēmṛā* on the deceased<sup>81</sup>. Another important feast in the Nestorian ecclesiastical calendar on which Narsai has composed *mēmṛē* cannot be left out: the Niniveh fast. Several *mēmṛē* have been connected with this event<sup>82</sup> and they appear in diverse forms<sup>83</sup>.

Within this group one cycle deserves some particular attention. As his literary creation shows, Narsai also had special interests. Whatever nourished the celebrating community comes within the range of his loving care. One result of this is seen in several *mēmṛē* of especial character which were designed to explain the liturgy.

In these expositions, we see him as a commentator. The first bears the title 'On the Exposition of the Mysteries'<sup>84</sup>. It is a commentary<sup>85</sup>, offering a detailed exposition of the Eucharistic liturgy — it is of particular importance to liturgico-historical studies. But the manuscript tradition is shaky. In some manuscripts, this work bears Narsai's name; in others it appears as an anonymous work<sup>86</sup>; in still others it is ascribed to 'Abdīšō' of 'Elam'<sup>87</sup>. Nevertheless to cast aspersion upon Narsai's right to this work is unjustified. The literary features ring with Narsai's language, style, and expression. Mingana<sup>88</sup> and Connolly<sup>89</sup> have studied

<sup>81</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 120a-131a; Ms. Bagd. 603, part IV, fol. 7b-18a; Ms. Vat. syr. 588, fol. 64a-69a; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 210a-217a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 68a-73a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9367, fol. 131b-141a.

<sup>82</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 100 ff.; 149 ff.; 257 ff.

<sup>83</sup> Ms. Bagd. 3119, fol. 121a-127b; Ms. Bagd. 3120, fol. 85b-90b. Ms. Mard. Chald. 30, fol. 1 ff.

<sup>84</sup> ܡܝܨܬܐ ܕܡܝܨܬܐ

<sup>85</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 270 ff.

<sup>86</sup> Ms. Cambr. Add. 1977 (1728) is the earliest; Ms. Ming. syr. 84, fol. 124b-142a; Ms. 'Aqrā 52, cah. 6, fol. 7b-cah. 9, fol. 8b.

<sup>87</sup> Ms. Seert 76 (13. cent.) is lost. Ms. Alqōš 151 (1680); here its title is ܡܝܨܬܐ ܕܡܝܨܬܐ 'about the greatness of the holy mysteries'. Cf. Ms. Berl. orient. quart. 1168, p. 407-444.

<sup>88</sup> 'Sed vix auctor saec. XIII potest compositor esse homiliae styli nitidissimi, non eundem in fine versuum sonum referentis, et omnibus styli Narsai notis prorsus abundantis. Assentimur ergo Ebedjesu Sobensi, clausulis codicum nostrorum, aliisque permultis auctoribus hanc homiliam Narsai ascribendam censentibus, possibilitate tamen admissa quorundam interpolationum circa finem', *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 28, footnote 1.

<sup>89</sup> 'I cannot believe that our Homily, so exactly reproducing the easy, straightforward style of Narsai, and abounding in his very marked characteristics, was, or could have been, composed in the 13th century. But if it was not written by the Ebedjesu of



commentaries on the liturgy of the Eucharist<sup>96</sup> and baptism<sup>97</sup>, composed by the learned bishop of Mopsuestia, have been a source for inspiration throughout the centuries enticing others to follow suit in the fructuation of this genre.

#### f. Ethics and Christian life

A small cycle of the *mēm̄rē* owes its birth to Narsai's reflection upon Christian ethics. Of course he often speaks about the fundamentals of Christian life. But here we touch upon those *mēm̄rē* in which only the issues of Christian life have found separate and special treatment. As just said, these *mēm̄rē* are not numerous, but they exhibit qualities very noteworthy. Besides poetical beauty and the excellency of language they exhibit, the spirit of persuasion and passion comes forcefully to the fore. They also indicate how instruction in Christian ethical questions was handled in the curriculum of the school.

The core of the cycle embraces general themes of an ethical nature, such as the iniquity of the world and the Christian witness in it<sup>98</sup>, and admonitions and castigations in various forms<sup>99</sup>. The virtue of humility has been expounded in a separate *mēm̄rā*<sup>100</sup>.

The new situation in the nascent Nestorian church created a milieu which was not congenial to the ancient Syrian traditions<sup>101</sup>. It was rather a disruption and therefore in fact a great disappointment<sup>102</sup> to all those who had remained loyal to the tenets, which had inspired the past. We cannot find out how Narsai felt in the new atmosphere. That this is so, is to be deeply regretted. Only some inferences are possible in the light of his own expressions. It is very instructive that the *mēm̄rē* we possess are, in their thought-world and cast, different from the tradition represented

<sup>96</sup> *Homélies catéchétiques* p. 460 ff.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320 ff

<sup>98</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 100 ff.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 149 ff.; I, p. 195 ff.; II, p. 340 ff.

<sup>100</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, fol. 186b-195a; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 186b-195a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 320b-325a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9367, fol. 241a-249a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 33b-38a; Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 246a-253a.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Vööbus, *Celibacy*, p. 35 ff., 49 ff.

<sup>102</sup> Vööbus, *Réformes de Barçama*, p. 25 ff.

by Ephrēm where the ascetic orientation is all-pervading<sup>103</sup>. There is no question about this difference. Asceticism is not dominant in Narsai's literary creation. However, there are indications that this change in orientation certainly did not receive his complete and unreserved approval. There is one *mēmṛā* through which Narsai clearly reveals the fact that his position in this matter differed from the leading spirits among the founding fathers of the Nestorian church. In this respect, his *mēmṛā* on the meaning of the perfection of the works<sup>104</sup>, besides its literary quality and temperament of treatment, is an historically important source for the epoch of reorientation especially since this period is marked by a severe scarcity in reliable sources. Thus a special note is sounded by Narsai — the note of asceticism<sup>105</sup>.

Narsai developed themes for a number of *mēmṛē* from the area of Christian life. In an unmistakable manner he reveals his heart. One feels the warmth with which he handled these themes shaping them into the form of the *mēmṛā*. Indeed, it seems to be true that Narsai's *mēmṛē* were read in the congregations<sup>106</sup>. But whether in the worship service or in some other way, we cannot say with certainty. If so, then it is certain that these *mēmṛē* were particularly suitable for this purpose, and may in part even have been designed for this purpose.

All the main features of the practice of religion are represented. A special *mēmṛā* is designed on prayer<sup>107</sup>. Fasting is treated in connection with the fasting of Jesus<sup>108</sup> and in a number of other *mēmṛē*<sup>109</sup>. *Mēmṛē* on worship<sup>110</sup> and the sacraments<sup>111</sup> have found discussion elsewhere.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Literary-Critical Studies in Ephrem*, p. 102 ff.

<sup>104</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, fol. 8b-11b; Ms. Bagd. 603, part III, fol. 116b-127b; Ms. Alqōš 161, fol. 195a-205a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 18b-23b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 315b-320b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9367, fol. 89a-99a; Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 98a-107b.

<sup>105</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 588, fol. 61a-64a. This *mēmṛā* deals with the forsaking of the world and its life. Reference is made also to monasticism, cf. fol. 61b.

<sup>106</sup> See page 116.

<sup>107</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 117 ff.

<sup>108</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, part III, fol. 8b-17a; Ms. syr. 594, fol. 73a-78a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5463, fol. 97b-102a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9367, fol. 150a-159a.

<sup>109</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 167 ff.; 181 ff.; 195 ff.; 223 ff.; 234 ff.

<sup>110</sup> See page 77 ff.

<sup>111</sup> See page 79 ff.

## g. Conditions in the contemporary Church

The conditions in the church also excited the inspiration of Narsai but not in a pleasant way. Into these *mēmṛē* he has poured his concern, aches and pain. Through these verses one comes closer to the atmosphere in which he lived, worked and struggled, and these texts unfold conditions which lay heavily upon his heart. One of these *mēmṛē* is devoted to the gravamina that plagued the clergy<sup>112</sup>. There are other *mēmṛē* which deal with weaknesses and failures in the Christian communities in a more general fashion<sup>113</sup>. One is directed against the rôle of women<sup>114</sup>. Tradition claims that his own experiences have prompted the composition of this reprobative admonition<sup>115</sup>.

## h. Theological reflection

Theological reflection, speculation and the finesse of dogmatic definitions played an insignificant part in the process of Narsai's literary creation. The path of theology and philosophy of religion invited him but seldom. Only occasionally did Narsai grasp for inspiration in these sources. His practically oriented mind obviously saw little attraction and stimulation in this area. There is only a very small cycle of *mēmṛē* which can be regarded as a special category. However, it must be remembered that its significance goes far beyond the size of the cycle. In the nascent Nestorian church these *mēmṛē* must have played their part in the propagation of the doctrinal tenets and formulations with which the church had cast its lot. Through the attractive poetic means, such *mēmṛē* must have contributed to their consolidation.

This cycle consists of the *mēmṛā* that discusses the mysteries of the Trinity<sup>116</sup>, another which expounds God's essence<sup>117</sup>, and

<sup>112</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 328 ff.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 100 ff.; 149 ff.; 210 ff.; II, p. 340 ff.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 353 ff.

<sup>115</sup> See page 116.

<sup>116</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 180 ff.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 168 ff.; about the essence of God speaks also another *mēmṛā*, *ibid.*, I, p. 257 ff.

another devoted to the secrets of the *paršūpā*<sup>118</sup>. Here his poetic mind and imagination had to be accommodated to the thought-forms created by Theodore of Mopsuestia. Some of this finesse has already been mentioned. One *mēmṛā* which deals with the relation of soul and body<sup>119</sup> comes closer to the domain of philosophical reflection.

### i. Historical themes

The history of the Christian church has rarely prompted stimulation in thought and provided inspiration. A few aspects captured Narsai's imagination sufficiently to find expression in his *mēmṛē*. It is to be expected that in that era of strife, contention and struggle, his attention was drawn to those who as living examples of devotion to their conviction endured in loyalty and perseverance, namely the confessors<sup>120</sup>, and above all the martyrs<sup>121</sup>. Now this is an instructive piece from the historical point of view. Although his main interest lies in the cult of the martyrs and its theology, he lets the picture of the persecutions in Persia loom in the background<sup>122</sup>. The last theme of blood-witnessing has found repeated treatment<sup>123</sup>.

An exception is made in the case of another vital issue in the origin of the church — the missionary interest and zeal as it is exemplified in the course of the propagation of the Christian seed and particularly in the expansion of Christianity in the Syrian communities<sup>124</sup>. In this text, an interesting picture is unfolded, presenting us with vital factors in the process and centering upon missionary expansion especially in regard to the ascetic communities<sup>125</sup>.

The other exception is as understandable as the previous just

<sup>118</sup> Ms. Bagd. 601, fol. 106b-111a; Ms. Bagd. 603, part IV, fol. 1a-7b; Ms. Vat. syr. 588, fol. 61a-64a; Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 204b-209a.

<sup>119</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 238 ff.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 28 ff.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 46 ff.

<sup>122</sup> It depicts the pressure brought about by the Mazdaism, the spirit of resistance kept alive by the brave and the ascetics, called here the *nezirē*, and the cult of the martyrs.

<sup>123</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, part III, fol. 38b-42a; Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 38a-39b.

<sup>124</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 68 ff.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Thus regardless of the heavily predominant religious lyrics, Narsai's *mēmnrē* allow us the inference that the beginnings of an historical interest are in some way also present in his literary productivity. Naturally we must consider this under very severe restrictions.

### j. Other works

Barḥadbešabbā is our earliest witness to other writings different in character and purpose: 'And he composed another (volume) about the evil habits, which had two other «prophets»<sup>130</sup> <sup>131</sup>. This is a work that has been quoted by Eliā bar Šīnāiā<sup>132</sup>. A brief characterization of it is given in the Chronicle of Seert. It says that this work described the activities of the clergy and the monks

<sup>126</sup> *Sur les trois docteurs*, p. 446 ff.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 467.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 471.

<sup>129</sup> The year when Philoxenos was elevated to the bishop's seat of Mabbūg.

<sup>130</sup> About this terminology see page 71.

<sup>131</sup> כְּחַיִּים וְכָמוֹהוּ יֵשׁוּעַ בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים הָיוּ מֵרֶגֶץ  
כְּחַיִּים *Histoire*, II, p. 612<sub>12</sub>.

<sup>132</sup> He has a brief excerpt taken from the third *mēmra* of this work, Ms. Alqōš 174, fol. 201a; Ms. Bagd. 406, fol. 176a; Ms. Vat. syr. 520, fol. 226a.

of the Jacobite faith <sup>133</sup>. The volume is lost. However some *mēmre*, possibly identifiable as parts of this work, have escaped the fate of perdition by finding a place in the great corpus. There are several such pieces <sup>134</sup>.

Some works cannot be discussed with the confidence we would desire. One such, the only theological work of this kind about which we have any information, namely, over a dispute between Cyril and Nestorios, is attributed to Narsai <sup>135</sup>. Whether the claim is justifiable cannot presently be settled <sup>136</sup>.

Another work listed in the nomenclature of 'Abdišō' <sup>137</sup> is entitled : 'Presentation of the Sacrifice' <sup>138</sup>. It could mean that this was a work on the liturgy as we have already seen. It might also mean something else. Since 'Abdišō' presents this work immediately before he introduces the commentary on the liturgy, there is a possibility that Narsai was a redactor of the normative Nestorian liturgy of Mari and Addai. There are clues which seem to point significantly in this direction <sup>139</sup>. If, indeed, he was entrusted with this task and privilege, ordinarily belonging to the competency of a bishop, it would underline the importance of Narsai's position. It would also throw additional light on the unusual rôle of the School of Nisibis in that period which saw the dawn of the Nestorian church.

#### k. Smaller liturgical poems

Another category of Narsai's literary creation was designed to contribute to the cultic life of his church, to enrich its liturgy and enliven its performance. These texts provided liturgical materials for service books, ritual manuals, prayer-books and hymnals. This variety is indicated by 'Abdišō' who registers the different genre <sup>140</sup>.

<sup>133</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 115.

<sup>134</sup> See page 83.

<sup>135</sup> Ms. Alqōš 326, fol. 42a-50a.

<sup>136</sup> I have not had access to this codex.

<sup>137</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LIII, p. 65.

<sup>138</sup> ܬܒܝܬܐ ܕܝܥܐܕܐ

<sup>139</sup> BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 112.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

He speaks of the *būiāē*<sup>141</sup> and *tūrgāmē*<sup>142</sup>. Then he adds *tešbḥātā*<sup>143</sup> of which we have some samples<sup>144</sup>. To these he adds *kārūzwātā*<sup>145</sup>. Even in this bare enumeration of various genre designed for the enrichment of the liturgy, we can glimpse the range and manifold character of this special contribution. This contribution, too, was a real asset for the nascent Nestorian church. The superb quality of this creation has secured for these materials a very important place in the liturgical life of the Nestorians. Some of it seems to live on in anonymous pieces.

Narsai's name is also associated with the *sūgiātā*<sup>146</sup>. This is a genre which appears in connection with the *mēmṛē*. Its purpose is to bring out adoration and praise in a more poetic manner. In addition to the cycle which has been edited<sup>147</sup> there are others in manuscripts: one appears added to the *mēmṛā* on Mary<sup>148</sup>, the other to the *mēmṛā* on the three doctors<sup>149</sup>, one to the *mēmṛā* on the fasting of Jesus<sup>150</sup> and another to the *mēmṛā* on Easter<sup>151</sup>. This category has absorbed texts of an anonymous origin so that not every piece which has this claim can be considered authentic.

Also the *hepākātā*<sup>152</sup> bear his name<sup>153</sup>. Whether this is justifiable is not easy to answer.

## 5. REPUTATION

Narsai enjoyed an immense reputation. Among his contemporaries,

<sup>141</sup> ܠܠܚܝܬܐ 'consolatory discourses'; also respective prayers.

<sup>142</sup> ܠܠܝܬܐ 'interpretations', 'homilies'. Liturgically also expository anthems preceding the Epistle and Gospel lessons.

<sup>143</sup> ܠܠܡܢܬܐ 'hymns', 'chants'.

<sup>144</sup> Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. 7, fol. 89a; Ms. Ming. syr. 25, fol. 122a-123b; Ms. Bagd. 180, fol. 124b-125b.

<sup>145</sup> ܠܠܝܬܐ 'litanies', 'bidding-prayers'; a public prayer which included a commemoration of patriarchs, bishops, priests and Christians.

<sup>146</sup> ܠܠܡܢܬܐ 'songs', 'canticles'.

<sup>147</sup> *Homiliae et carmina*, II, p. 370 ff.

<sup>148</sup> Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 54b-56b; Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 59b-62b; Ms. Alqōš 160, fol. 58a-60a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 54b-56b.

<sup>149</sup> *Sur les trois docteurs*, p. 446 ff.

<sup>150</sup> Ms. Bagd. 602, fol. 140a-142a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368, fol. 140a-142a.

<sup>151</sup> Ms. Borg. syr. 83, fol. 162b-164b.

<sup>152</sup> ܠܠܡܢܬܐ 'antiphons'.

<sup>153</sup> The earliest text existed in Ms. Urm. 211 (16 cent.).

no one was his equal in this respect. A combination of various gifts and talents secured him a place which caused his adversaries and even some of his friends to envy him.

First of all his gift for language made him a master of the Syriac idiom. With his poetic gifts, he charmed his hearers. He also knew how to make his poetry popular: 'He put the truthful thought of orthodoxy into the elaborate form of the *mēmre* to pleasant melodies'<sup>1</sup>.

The immense renown he had secured for himself, is echoed in the epithets by which the tradition has immortalized Narsai. 'Abdīšō' introduces him into the pantheon of the literary celebrities as 'the harp of the (Holy) Spirit'<sup>2</sup>. In other sources he appears as 'the tongue of the Orient and the poet of the Christian religion'<sup>3</sup>, 'the haven of religion' etc.

Over against these lavishly spent epithets, his theological adversaries called him a 'Leper' which reveals their helplessness, envy and wrath. This is hardly an allusion to a kind of skin disease the marks of which he presumably bore.

Besides his poetic gifts, Narsai must have had other talents. His learning was regarded by his contemporaries as being unique. To his merit, let it be said that he amalgamated Hellenistic scholarship as cultivated in the Antiochian School with theological thinking in the indigenous Syrian milieu. The bearing of this combination is enhanced by the fact that this took place at a time which was the most important epoch in the Christianity under the rule of the Sassanides, namely when the foundations for the nascent church among the Eastern Syrians were laid. Narsai's importance in this epoch of consolidation has found expression in a very contemporary way. His learning and knowledge were esteemed so singular that, his grateful admirers in their amazement and veneration, believed they saw angels hovering around his chair when he taught<sup>4</sup>. In the tradition, Narsai lives on as the 'doctor and tongue of the Orient'<sup>5</sup> or 'the admirable doctor'<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 6127-8. The text is printed on page 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LIII, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 55, fol. 1a.

<sup>6</sup> MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 44.

Narsai must have had certain skills in instruction — they help to explain his success in the pedagogical activity in Edessa as well as later in Nisibis. Barḥadbešabbā calls this the 'fluency of his instruction'<sup>7</sup>. Other personal qualities helped to elevate him in the eyes of ordinary people to a high pedestal of esteem and renown<sup>8</sup>. All this has earned for him the title of honor *Rabā* 'the Great'<sup>9</sup>.

Another source of Narsai's immense reputation lies in the sanctity of his life. His asceticism spoke to the simple-minded much louder than the movements of his spirit. He chastised his bodily needs. In him the figure of the athlete<sup>10</sup> emerges among the leading spirits of the Nestorian church. The ideal of poverty found an eminent exponent in him. The only possessions he had were his books<sup>11</sup>. The nature of his bed reveals the same attitude: 'His bed was a mat of the spathe of a palm and of the palm (leaves?), and his cover was a patched cloak'<sup>12</sup>. He was severe toward himself in satisfying his bodily needs. In eating he allowed only the minimum: 'He took continuously (only) a simple nourishment of pottage that he prepared for himself at evening time, or one prepared for two days'<sup>13</sup>. Not only poverty and restriction, but also mortification in the typical Syrian fashion<sup>14</sup>, inflicting self-torture, were exemplified in his person. Barḥadbešabbā describes his wrestling with sleep in the following instructive manner: 'On a simple seat he expelled the sleep of his eyes; and if it happened that he was conquered despite much vigilance by slumber, he stood up or walked, or he put exciting and awakening species (of means) into his nostrils, whether sharp and sour or warm and fragrant, or he kept a volume before his face and so he slept on his seat; how often-times the volume became the cause of his awakening because it slipped from his hands before his face'<sup>15</sup>. Thus his epigons celebrated Narsai

<sup>7</sup> ܡܚܪܒܝܬܐ ܕܢܪܝܐ, *Histoire*, II, p. 609<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Barḥadbešabbā mentions expressly the following features in Narsai's personality: dignity, excellence of his appearance, his friendliness to everyone, his great charity, and the fluency of instruction, *ibid.*, p. 609.

<sup>9</sup> SŪRĪN, *Mēmra de-abāhātā*, p. 400<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> ܐܬܠܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ, *Histoire*, II, p. 614.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 603.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 611<sup>5-6</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 611<sup>3-5</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> VÖÖBUS, *History of Asceticism*, II, p. 292 ff.

<sup>15</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 611<sup>7-12</sup>.

as a *nazīrā*<sup>16</sup> who in every respect appears in the stream of the ancient Syrian ascetic tradition<sup>17</sup>.

All these features were a great asset to Narsai's enormous reputation. He thus secured a special place of esteem and veneration among the bearers of the ascetic traditions who had reasons to be dissatisfied with the attitude of the church leaders in this respect<sup>18</sup>.

In the light of the foregoing discussion it is not difficult to see how a mystical halo was woven around Narsai. Supra-human abilities were ascribed to this monk who from his cell directed the school, enriched the literary needs and strengthened the confessional foundations. His prayers were regarded as efficacious and his person as possessing thaumaturgic powers. Legends were put in circulation which depicted him as a man with super-human powers. One exponent of these has been reported<sup>19</sup>.

#### 6. THE FIRST CYCLE OF THE STATUTES

Unfortunately very scanty information is at our disposal about the oldest canons set up for the School of Nisibis. No known source about the school has preserved them. The sources we have consulted up to this point know nothing about the existence of these regulations. Even those closest to the traditions of the school, namely the reports by two Barḥadbešabbās, are silent about this question<sup>1</sup>. This reminds us how incomplete these sources actually are. In their original form, the canons have suffered perdition. However, the memory of these regula appears in the documents emanating from the traditions of the school itself.

In several respects the historically important preamble<sup>2</sup> added to the first set of canons in this cycle of statutes — in the part that reports the alleged talk during the audience before Hōše', bishop of Nisibis — includes *en passant* a brief panoramic survey

<sup>16</sup> VÖÖBUS, *Zur Terminologie*.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. VÖÖBUS, *Celibacy*, p. 45 ff.

<sup>18</sup> See VÖÖBUS, *Réformes de Barḥauma*, p. 28 ff.

<sup>19</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 614 f.

<sup>1</sup> See page 52 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Statutes*, p. 51 ff.



ambles<sup>7</sup> and in other sources<sup>8</sup>. In this respect, the preamble's report of these circumstances is more colorful than factual. It is far more likely the work of Narsai even when one considers whatever his colleagues may have contributed to them. It is difficult to see how a man with wide experience as a director of the School of Edessa, now carrying the responsibility of building up the new school, could have had no essential part in such an undertaking. It was more vital to the head of the school than to the bishop. Realistically considered Narsai did not only take a keen interest in the substance of the rules to be included into the statutes as a guide for the work but was without doubt responsible for their formulation.

These directives became the norm. Reference is made to these first statutes as normative regimen in the following way: 'In these canons, as much as possible, we have walked up to now — some of us through the compulsion of necessity and some of us with good will'<sup>9</sup>.

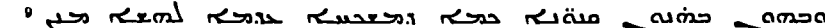
The same source tells us that after the death of Bishop Baršaumā difficulties arose in the school due to the activities of certain persons<sup>10</sup>.

Further we learn that this situation necessitated a new look at the legislation for the purpose of devising supplementary regulations. It is not said explicitly, but the impression is left — and this, indeed, is to be expected — that these first canons were amalgamated into the enlarged and improved recension of the new statutes. This, too, is so natural as to be predictable.

At least in one place a suture is tangible which clearly unfolds the presence of a substructure in the composition of the canons. First, as an examination of the structure of the canons shows, one of them is out of place — very ostentatiously so<sup>11</sup>. Secondly,

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51, 86 f., 105.

<sup>8</sup> See page 49 ff.

<sup>9</sup>  *Statutes*, p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> Can. III, *ibid.*, p. 75, which deals with the offences, comes immediately after the canons on the obligations of the *rabbaitā*, but other similar canons dealing with offences, namely can. XII-XVI, and XVIII-XX, *ibid.*, p. 80 ff., 82 ff., appear towards the end of the cycle.

7. THE SECOND CYCLE OF THE STATUTES 496

They were motivated by the fact that the situation in the school made the step imperative. It is said that the time was after the death of Bishop Baršaumā<sup>2</sup>, however the date cannot be fixed<sup>3</sup>. There appeared persons who had caused such difficulty that those entrusted with responsibility had become concerned. The preamble presents at some length the justification for this undertaking. Allusions are made to certain persons whose behavior and conduct have been embarrassing to the school : 'Some of the brothers, who in their will were guided by those that are not proper, became estranged to the purpose of our community as they thought that they become free from the law of censure and from the force of punishment'<sup>4</sup>. It is stated that the school had to undergo even critical

<sup>12</sup> Contention, confusion, stealing, slander and intrigues in can. III, *ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>13</sup> See can. XII, XIII, XIV, XVI, XVIII, *ibid.*, p. 80 ff.

<sup>1</sup> *Statutes*, p. 51 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> The date of Barsaumā's death is not known.

*Statutes*, p. 58.





the fate of loss and destruction. It is a set of norms comprising 22 canons. This is, indeed, a singularly good fortune.

With regard to their content they cover with unequal attention two areas : on the one hand, the administration, namely the *rabbaitā* and the teachers<sup>16</sup>, and on the other hand student-affairs<sup>17</sup>. This section occupies most of the space.

#### 8. ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The head of the school, upon whose shoulders the responsibility for instruction, the care for the community and the administration of the institution rested, was the occupant of the chair of biblical interpretation. This is a replica of the structure as it existed in the School of Edessa. In the official source that comes from the School of Nisibis, this leader is called : 'our *rabbān*, the *mepašqānā* of the school'<sup>1</sup>. He was chosen from the teachers of the school.

Managing the many burdens of office was possible if he retained for himself the most important duties. Among these was the surveillance of the teaching staff<sup>2</sup>. For the rest, he needed others to assist him thus relieving him of some of his pressing burdens.

The administration of the institution was committed to a special officer. The person to whom the task of upholding the community life and order was entrusted was the *rabbaitā*. He was the right hand of the head of the school. He was made responsible for the whole administration, the operations of this busy life and the thousand items of housekeeping. In his capacity he united in his person the duties of a manager, steward and dean.

Owing to the importance of his place in the structure of the community, it was exactly determined how his office was to be carried out. His qualifications were carefully examined<sup>3</sup>; he was elected by the convocation of the members of the college subject

<sup>16</sup> See page 98 f., 100 ff.

<sup>17</sup> See page 109 ff.

<sup>1</sup> *Statutes*, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Can. XX, *ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> ܡܝܬܪܐܢܐ ܡܝܬܪܐܢܐ ܡܝܬܪܐܢܐ 'a reliable person who is fitting for the guidance of the community', can. I, *ibid.*, p. 73 f.

to the consent of the head of the school<sup>4</sup>. The period of his term was one year<sup>5</sup>. After he was duly elected all the necessary authority was given him for the efficient exercise of his management : 'No one is permitted to stand up and to make a party, quarrel and confusion about something that was right; and whosoever is found doing one of these (things), and standing up against the truth and disputing, shall receive punishment; he shall become foreign to the community and the residence in the town'<sup>6</sup>. Infraction of this rule drew severe punishment<sup>7</sup>.

We also learn something about the way Narsai carried out his duties of administration. His jurisdiction was not the same in all matters. For the sake of circumspection and care in the interest of the welfare of the community, he was bound to share his responsibilities with others. In financial questions measures of precaution were established : 'He shall not proceed with matters of income and expense of the school without two or three witnesses' <sup>8</sup>. The same reservations were applied to the handling of the delicate question of punishment : 'Without the counsel of our *rabbān* and that of the outstanding brothers he shall not bring punishment on the offenders, but every act, pronouncing punishment or remission or something else, he shall do with the counsel of the brothers' <sup>9</sup>. The same consultation was expected also in other important matters as we shall see later.

In other questions regarding the order and management of the

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> *קנה קנה לך קנה קנה* 'according to the order and custom year by year', *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> חסד ל' שלף ונפסק מן הדין וכן נשנים מהענין : כל דבר  
והיה מהם מהם והוא שיש להם חסד וזה מה שהם חסדים וזה מה שהם חסדים  
זו המלה הזאת . אבל השם הזה , ממנו נבנה לשון החסד  
*ibid.*, p. 74. ולחזור ויבא.

<sup>7</sup> נאסבם . ונחמיה וישיבה . חזקתו של המלך . וישיבה  
הוא יתן לתורה כפי חובתו 'he shall give to the school as a recompense  
10 denars of gold, and shall leave the community and the town in shame', can. XXII,  
*ibid.*, p. 85.

can. II, *ibid.*, p. 74.

10. ללך חלחל ויהי סודותי נתיב : חסד חזק על חסד  
לך נחם. ללך על ויחבד. חסד חזק על עממם מ



such important decisions as an order prohibiting<sup>15</sup> the trips into the Byzantine territory<sup>16</sup>, permission to use the court outside<sup>17</sup> and the determination of the punishment for offenders<sup>18</sup>. The two first involve decisions of a very extraordinary kind. In all these matters, it seems, the decisions rested mainly in the hands of the council.

The council of brothers is mentioned after the *rabbaitā* in several other instances. In these cases, we have to do with questions in which the judgement of the *rabbaitā* was most important and authoritative, — i.e. whether to grant grace for the violation of the rule prohibiting the trips into the Byzantine territory<sup>19</sup> and the orientation to be given to the newly arrived students<sup>20</sup>. In this connection it is interesting that for a valid will, the presence of the *rabbaitā* was absolutely necessary, although the council of brothers was also involved<sup>21</sup>. But it is expressly stated that his absence annuls its validity : 'If, however, he shall make (a will) when the *rabbaitā* is far off, the will he has made shall be void, and all he has shall enter (the funds of) the school'<sup>22</sup>.

As it appears from these formulations, the brothers who constituted the council were certainly teachers. However, the question whether all teachers belonged to it, or just some designated for this task, cannot be answered on the basis of our document.

#### 9. INSTRUCTION UNDER NARSAI

In an authentic document that comes directly from the school itself, we have only a few references to the teachers. There is only one canon that speaks directly about them, but its purpose

<sup>15</sup> Obviously the reason was that schools of the communities and monasteries in the Byzantine territory were regarded as centers of the virus of heterodoxy.

<sup>16</sup> Can. IV, *ibid.*, p. 75 f.

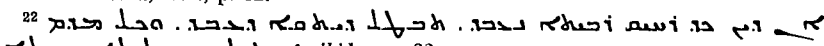
<sup>17</sup> Can. XII, *ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> Can. XXI, *ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>19</sup> Can. IV, *ibid.*, p. 75 f.

<sup>20</sup> Can. VII, *ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>21</sup> Can. XVII, *ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>22</sup>  *ibid.*, p. 82.

is to prevent possible neglect in the fulfilment of their duties. Ways have been determined to handle such cases effectively<sup>1</sup>.

Other references are casual. However, by way of inference and by studying the etymology of the terms, some conclusions can be drawn about their functions.

Already in the first canon a position appears, called the *mepašqānā*<sup>2</sup> which in the structure of the institution was also the office of the director of the school. The term means 'interpreter', 'commentator' or 'exegete'. Regarding the nature of this function there is no question whatsoever. As the term stands only the exegesis of the Scriptures can be meant. This was regarded as the highest discipline and into its bearers's hands, the office of the head of the school was entrusted.

Under the *mepašqānā*, there stood a staff of teachers with other functions, designed to carry out the preparatory work needed for the chair of biblical exegesis.

In the canon which deals with the teachers, the first place is occupied by the *maḡreīānē*<sup>3</sup>. What their functions were is not indicated<sup>4</sup>. The term is derived from the root 'to read' and etymologically these teachers could be characterized as 'lecturers' or 'readers'. The range of these functions, on the basis of the observations we can make in other sources, would be from elementary instruction in reading to every kind of more advanced study in textual, lexical and grammatical areas. What we know of one of the *maḡreīānē* who served in the capacity of such a 'reader' at the School of Nisibis, Jāusep Hūzāiā, gives us a hint about what was involved in this instruction — namely that such a *maḡreīānā* produced the earliest Syriac grammar known to us<sup>5</sup>.

The emphasis on the preparatory work appears in another function designed to strengthen the foundation of basic knowledge. This was carried out by the *mehageīānē*<sup>6</sup>. In connection with this

<sup>1</sup> Can. XX, *Statutes*, p. 83 f.

<sup>2</sup> *ܡܥܦܫܩܢܐ*, *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> *ܡܥܪܝܢܐ*, can. XX, *ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> 'Le terme de *ܡܥܪܝܢܐ* paraît désigner spécialement le professeur chargé du cours de chant liturgique', CHABOT, *École de Nisibe*, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 17.

<sup>6</sup> *ܡܥܗܓܝܢܐ* can. XX, *Statutes*, p. 83.

term, great difficulties arise. The meaning of this word is ambiguous. Its Afel form of the verb<sup>7</sup> means 'to cause to meditate' and 'to teach rhetoric'. This is the reason for the proposal that we have here to do with the teachers in rhetorics or in meditation<sup>8</sup>. However, there is a more realistic way. The same verb means also 'to read syllable by syllable' and 'to study'. This suggests teachers who took care of the instruction in reading knowledge. What — more exactly — this function means in terms of the curriculum, and in distinction from the *maqrēiānē*, cannot be recovered with absolute certainty. If indeed, some significance can be ascribed to the observation that the *mehageiūnē* appear after the *maqrēiānē*<sup>9</sup> one could think that these teachers were charged with more elementary instruction. In other sources the term evidently refers to the elementary instruction in reading<sup>10</sup>. All these considerations find a confirmation in other sources<sup>11</sup>.

The statutes of the school contain very little about the kind of teaching offered. In this respect, our source is almost wholly barren of good fruit. It is content to mention some terms of the bearers of the disciplines. If some data were not recoverable from other sources, our knowledge of the instruction given in this place would be almost nil.

First of all, the work on the lower level needs to be touched upon. According to all indications, advanced instruction was preceded by a certain propaedeutic, furnished by a cycle of disciplines.

One of the first disciplines which needed remedial help and cultivation was the art of writing. Since in the lower schools, it was a discipline which was not begun until the knowledge of reading was acquired and progress was made to a more advanced stage, it was necessary to provide remedial instruction in this area. Among the teachers, there appears one called *sāperā* 'scribe'<sup>12</sup>. There is no question about the sphere of his responsibilities — he was to acquaint

<sup>7</sup> 

<sup>8</sup> 'Meditationsmeister', BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 114.

<sup>9</sup> Can. XX, *Statutes*, p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> Ms. Par. syr. 375, fol. 152b. Also 'Abdišō' explains the term in the sense of elementary instruction, Ms. Vat. syr. 520, fol. 78a.

<sup>11</sup> VööBUS, *Statutes*, p. 83.

<sup>12</sup>  *Statutes*, p. 60.



Interest in music was cultivated in liturgical chanting. This as 'recitation of the choirs' <sup>20</sup> appears in the description of the curriculum where it is placed after writing, reading and interpretation <sup>21</sup>. This involves liturgical chanting for the worship service as well as for the instruction itself. We are informed that Narsai's own way of instruction was combined with chanting in some way. In connection with Narsai's work of instruction as interpreter, it is said that he did his work of exegesis and accompanied it with chanting : 'As he made chanting and interpretation every day' <sup>22</sup>. This seems to refer to the canticles which accompanied his *mēmvrē*. In fact, some of these vestiges have been preserved in the form of refrains placed at the beginning of them. The same has been registered a little more closely in a description given of Narsai's literary creation made by Barḥadbešabbā : 'And he put the truthful thought of orthodoxy into the elaborate form of the *mēmvrē* in pleasant melodies' <sup>23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> See page 196 f.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> ܠܗ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܥܒܕܐ ܕܢܚܝܬܐ ܕܩܝܣܪܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ  
ܡܬܠܐ ܡܬܠܐ BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 612<sub>8-9</sub>.

Nothing is known about the theological disciplines which were taught in the School of Nisibis. There is no doubt that they had their place in the curriculum. Certainly the issues of the doctrinal tenets of the Nestorian creed found loving care and cultivation. We have some reasons to think that the theological subject could also have been presented in the form of commentaries on the creeds.

Subjects on the more practical issues of cult and worship certainly had their firm place in the curriculum. According to all indications they were presented in the form of commentaries on the liturgy, church year and martyrologia. Samples of these presentations can be seen in the writings produced by Narsai on these subjects<sup>24</sup>. Among these one subject that dealt with the origin of the festivals of the church year may also have been represented at that time. Writings which have grown out of the lectures on these materials but belong to a period somewhat later, can be seen in the treatises of Thomas of Edessa<sup>25</sup> and Qiiōrē<sup>26</sup>.

23 The ancillary disciplines certainly included those of secular provenance, although nothing more definite can be recovered in our sources. One term, *bādūqā*<sup>27</sup> has been connected with the discipline of philosophy. The term stems from a root<sup>28</sup> which means 'to search', 'to scrutinize'. This has been regarded as a hint in the direction of philosophy<sup>29</sup>. Encouragement is given via the information we have about the activities of one such *badūqā*. We know that Mīka'ēl, who was a *bādūqā* was the author of many philosophical writings<sup>30</sup>.

Whether this is so or, as we are inclined to think, whether this term was employed more flexibly<sup>31</sup> so that it can refer generally to more advanced research students, in any case philosophy was certainly not absent from the curriculum, the more so because the

<sup>24</sup> See page 77 ff.

<sup>25</sup> See page 173 ff.

<sup>26</sup> See page 174 ff.

<sup>27</sup> ܒܕܘܩܐ *Statutes*, p. 51.

<sup>28</sup> ܒܕܘܩ.

<sup>29</sup> 'Il enseignait vraisemblablement la philosophie', SCHER, *Appendices*, p. 398.

<sup>30</sup> See page 278 f.

<sup>31</sup> We have reasons to be cautious. It is reported that one of the *badūqē* of the School of Nisibis composed a liturgico-historical and cultic study the 'Cause of the Feast of the Virgin, Mother of Christ', in Ms. Ming. syr. 196, fol. 25a-44b.

authorities whom the Nestorians kept in grateful memory were also authors involved in making the Greek philosophical works available in Syriac<sup>32</sup>. It is understandable that the influence of these champions' interest was not negligible. Moreover, translation projects like these<sup>33</sup> could hardly fail to be related to the needs of instruction at the school. It can be postulated without any risk that such translation works grew out of the practical needs of instruction.

Next to nothing is known about other possible subjects of a profane character. How much the curriculum included from fields like profane history, geography, rhetoric and some branches of the natural sciences must remain open. References which we have belong to a later period of time<sup>34</sup>. One can safely assume that there were teachers who dealt with these areas of knowledge, one more, another less. The demarcation line between the theological and secular subjects was not always drawn sharply at that time.

All these various fields and subjects were only of ancillary character preparing ground for the discipline that was regarded in the School of Nisibis as the queen of the disciplines. This was the area of biblical exegesis. We are fortunate that something more can be said about the work in this most important field. Namely about the character of the instruction in this area we can learn a good deal from other sources.

Already during the last period of the School of Edessa, the work in biblical exegesis was based on the Antiochian traditions, namely on the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia which were translated into Syriac<sup>35</sup>. Thus the spirit of the exegesis of Theodore became normative for the School of Edessa. Under the directorship of Narsai the Antiochian exegetical tradition was the model. It also was carried over into the School of Nisibis. This tradition was

<sup>32</sup> 'L'école de Nisibe paraît avoir été de tout temps une école spéciale de théologie, à la différence d'autres écoles syriennes, particulièrement des écoles jacobites, où l'on donnait une plus large part aux études profanes, principalement à la philosophie profane', CHABOT, *École de Nisibe*, p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> See page 20 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Bar 'Idtā who studied in the School of Nisibis is reported to have made unusual progress in the Christian subjects as well as in the Greek science, IŠŌ'DENAĦ, *Livre de la chasteté*, XV, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> See page 14f.



gorical method completely<sup>38</sup>. With unusual clarity he has seen the fallacy of that approach: 'They, indeed, turn everything backwards, since they wish to make no distinction in the divine Scripture between what the text says (historical) and dream in the night'<sup>39</sup>. Thus he substituted a realistic method of exegesis for the highly speculative approach. This was determined by pure grammatical and literary-historical analysis. Theodore carried out his work strictly, methodically and consistently and to the effect that the tropic speech, welcomed by those who want 'to fly but do not wish to go on the road'<sup>40</sup>, was reduced to the literal meaning, making no allowance for any other meaning of the Scripture. However, he admitted typology as a valid hermeneutical principle.

What has been said just now takes care of the opinion which has been forwarded, namely that the *mehageiānā* refers to an office of interpretation of the sacred texts in the spiritual sense. This is not tenable. While in the Hellenistic schools, the exegetical tradition operated on the principle that the literal and historical sense of the sacred texts is only a crust which conceals a spiritual sense, which has to be uncovered, the exegetical traditions of the Antiochian provenance have kept close to the historical and literal sense. The spiritual sense was regarded as legitimate only in texts which were considered allegorical.

These are premises which help us to get a glimpse of the climate in the exegetical work fostered at the School of Nisibis. The corollary of this approach is apparent. This sound, calm, matter-of-fact

<sup>38</sup> Gal. IV, is an instructive sample. Theodore first interprets Paul's allegory as typology and then rejects the allegorical method completely, using lucid and logical argumentation, *In ep. ad Galatas*, IV, 24, p. 73 ff.

<sup>39</sup> 'Nam quod dixit, sicut similitudinem utique ostendit; similitudo autem fieri non poterit, rebus non stantibus. Addito et quod dixerat tunc, incertum existimans quantum tempus designans dicit, superflua erit et temporum divisio, si tamen non fuerit factum. Sed apostolus quidem ita dicit; isti vero omnia e contrario faciunt, omnem de divina scriptura historiam somniorum nocturnorum nihil differre volentes', *ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>40</sup> Δήλου γε ὄντος, ὡς τοῖς ἱπτασθαι μὲν, ἀλλὰ μὴ δι' ὁδοῦ βαίνειν προβεμένους, περιττὴ καὶ ἀσύμβολος ἡ τῶν σημείων ὑπόδειξις, *ADRIANOS, Isagoge*, col. 1312.

Theodore has also written a special work in 5 books against the allegorical method, 'Ανδρῆς', *Catalogus librorum* XIX, p. 34. Facundus used a work regarding which he says: de allegoria et historia quem contra Originem scripsit, *Pro defensione*, III, 6, col. 602.



was in session <sup>46</sup>. As the statutes tell us, this lasted throughout the year with the recess from the month of 'Āb <sup>47</sup> to Tešrī qadīm <sup>48</sup> during which the students could take care of the needs for their livelihood <sup>49</sup>. The rigidity of this practice was mitigated later <sup>50</sup>.

Finally, it remains to be added that the instruction was free. Nowhere have we an indication that the students had any obligation to make remuneration for the tuition.

In conclusion, the School of Nisibis provided for the young Nestorian church the systematic training of its ministry by a fixed program in an institution exclusively devoted to theological study. For several generations the School of Nisibis remained the principal institution for the education of the clergy, the missionaries, monks and teachers.

#### 10. ORDER AND DISCIPLINE IN THE COMMUNITY OF THE SCHOOL

Thanks to the statutes established by Narsai, we are permitted a glimpse into the life in his institution, the requirements and norms laid upon the students within and outside of the school during the period of recess.

The basic requirements expected from all the students help us in determining the character of the community.

In the first place, the school was a strictly confessional institution and the Nestorian faith was a precondition for admission. Anyone enticed away from or deserting the fold of orthodoxy had to leave the school as well as the town <sup>1</sup>.

The school resembled a monastic foundation. The students and no doubt also the teachers lived in the school, constituting a community. It was expected that the students were to remain in the state of celibacy. We could wish more information about this ques-

<sup>46</sup> See 'Abdīšō', *Nomocanon* VI, 3, p. 273 f; cf. an analysis of this text in VööBUS, *Statutes*, p. 107 ff.

<sup>47</sup> The month of August.

<sup>48</sup> The month of October.

<sup>49</sup> Can. V, *ibid.*, p. 77 f.

<sup>50</sup> See page 186 f.

<sup>1</sup> Can. III, *Statutes*, p. 75.

tion, but the little that is at our disposal, is clear enough. In one of the regulations, it appears that the students had to make a promise<sup>2</sup> for it is stated : 'Some of the brothers who come to the school to learn instruction, and abandon their promises and slip off to take wives...' <sup>3</sup>. It is evident that the candidates had to promise to remain unmarried. Students who broke this promise during their course of study had to leave the school as well as the town, as those caught violating the code of chastity<sup>4</sup>.

With regard to possessions the first impression is that no special restrictions were imposed on the students except those valid for all Christians. This is caused by the rule that the students were forbidden to take usury but permitted to lend their money to others : 'On interest, however, as this is (customary) in the church, that is (at the rate of) one hundredth of a denar per year, he may lend in order that the community may not be reviled because of his affair if he takes more' <sup>5</sup>.

Yet we must be on guard lest we conclude that the question is settled by these observations. Some signs which are more hidden indicate that the question must be more complicated. There seems to be symptoms which point to the possibility that some kind of restriction may have been required. The regulations set up for the conditions of validity of the testaments seem to be ominous<sup>6</sup>. Such formulations lead us to think that it may have been possible that the candidates had to hand over their possessions to the school.

As these regulations show, the life in the community of the school can be characterized more exactly as semi-monastic.

Life in the residence was regulated in such a way that the students could not live singly in the cells but only in groups : 'The brothers, however, who come to the school shall not dwell singly and by twos in the cell but shall be with others without confusion' <sup>7</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ 'their promises', can. III, *ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ *ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> Can. VI, *ibid.*, p. 78. A short epitome of the canons reshapes the text and forbids also lending out at interest, Ms. Par. syr. 306, fol. 111b.

<sup>6</sup> See page 99.

<sup>7</sup> ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ ܠܥܡܠܬܗܘܢ can. X, *Statutes*, p. 80.

This obviously was necessitated in order to allow better surveillance over the discipline. Thus the buildings were divided into small dwelling places for small groups of students.

Other rules show how other questions of communal life were settled in the school. The entire time in the community while the school was in session, was devoted to study and certainly the practice of piety though the statutes say nothing about the latter. No time was allowed for earning income : 'No one of the brothers shall practice business or craft' <sup>8</sup>.

Other observations allow us a glimpse into the life under extraordinary circumstances. Provisions were made for those who were afflicted with sickness : 'The brothers who reside in one cell, if it happens that one of them become sick, shall be with him and serve him as is becoming' <sup>9</sup>. In the case of death, if there was no valid will made in the presence of the *rabbaitā*, all the belongings of the deceased pupil went into the funds of the school <sup>10</sup>.

About a third of the norms treats of the punitive methods designed to guarantee discipline in the school, to uphold order, to protect the morals of others and to correct offenders. These supplement the picture.

Certain trespasses were severely punished : stealing, witchcraft, plotting, lies, outside intrigues <sup>11</sup>, offences against chastity <sup>12</sup>, making confusion <sup>13</sup>, appropriation of lost items <sup>14</sup> and usurpation of manuscripts belonging to the school <sup>15</sup>. There was no toleration for these offences. Anyone guilty of such offence was expelled not only from the school but also from the town.

Leniency was shown towards other trespassers in such a way that they were not immediately excluded but subjected to penal

<sup>8</sup> *can. V, ibid., p. 77.*

<sup>9</sup> *can. XI, ibid., p. 80.*

<sup>10</sup> *Can. XVII, ibid., p. 82; see also page 000.*

<sup>11</sup> *Can. III, ibid., p. 75.*

<sup>12</sup> *Adultery and fornication, ibid., p. 75.*

<sup>13</sup> *can. XII, ibid., p. 80 f.*

<sup>14</sup> *Namely items which belong to others, can. XIV, ibid., p. 81.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid., p. 81.*



The penal system was rigid and the statutes reveal a jealous vigilance as to their execution. Nothing was allowed to interfere with their execution and no escape was left for the transgressor once the penalty was imposed. Any interference from outside was excluded. This was done with absolute strictness : 'Whoever is detected because of some offence, and the brothers and the *rabbaitā* of the community have determined the punishment upon him which he is to receive according to his offence, but he does not obey the decision that they have determined over him, and he goes and takes refuge with some cleric<sup>21</sup> or one of the seculars and seeks for himself patrons<sup>22</sup> and a defender<sup>23</sup> — he shall not be worthy of mercy even if his offence is small'<sup>24</sup>. He shall be expelled from the community and the town as one who has sinned again against obedience.

One of the great concerns, indicated already by the place of the canon it holds in the list of the norms, and by its explicit character and its length, entirely out of proportion, was the visiting of the Byzantine territory. No reason, whether instruction, piety, visiting holy places or business, was valid. In principle, violation of the rule meant expulsion. However, the temptation must have been so great, that provisions were made which left the hands of the administration free if it could not carry out this principle with

[illegible]



## 11. DIFFICULTIES AND HARDSHIPS

His relationship with Barṣaumā did not remain the same. A dark shadow fell upon the friendship that had meant so much for the nascent Nestorian church. Tension grew between the two men and finally erupted. According to the tradition, two of Narsai's *mēmṛē* are reported to have been connected with these experiences, composed at a time when he had left Nisibis<sup>1</sup>, expressing his sentiments of disappointment and resentment — one about himself<sup>2</sup> and another

<sup>2</sup> 'bad is the time that is given me in my habitation, and short is the acquisition of spiritual life in it', *ibid.*, p. 610<sub>10-11</sub>. This *mēmra* is extant, see *Homiliae et carmina*, I, p. 210 ff.



his residence at some distance from the dwelling of the bishop <sup>9</sup>.

This conflict was only an episode in Narsai's turbulent life. In fact, his work was subjected to agitation by the undertakings of his theological adversaries<sup>10</sup>. It is quite possible that the difficulties which arose in the school after the death of Barṣaumā<sup>11</sup> hang together with the activities of the theological adversaries. Their hand could well have been involved in these intrigues. It is less probable that here we have to see repercussions of the previous rift between Narsai and the bishop of the town. His theological adversaries used every opportunity to needle him and to discredit him in the eyes of the people. Word of mouth and writing upon writing were thrown against each other; heated battles were carried on swinging back and forth on the trajectory of controversy.

His theological adversaries were quick to carry Narsai's expressions in word and writing which had escaped the tight control of circumspection to the attention of the state authorities, thus causing intrigues of dangerous political nature. One such episode is recorded. The troubles were caused by one of his *mēm̐rē* in which he had used strong words against Peroz <sup>12</sup> in connection with an expedition against Bēt Qaṭṭrāiē <sup>13</sup> that had ended in defeat. Thus he himself had delivered a weapon into the hands of his enemies. Two men denounced him to Qawad, Qafr-ladebaiā of 'Ain 'Adad and Jōḥannān bar 'Amraiē. Even the exact time is given, namely when Qawad besieged Amid <sup>14</sup>. When Narsai's friends in Bēt Hūzāiē heard what had happened, they notified Narsai so that he could take steps towards pacifying the irate king. We are also told what Narsai did in this situation. He composed another *mēm̐rā* which contained positive expressions regarding the Persian empire and its power. This was translated into Persian by his friends in Bēt

<sup>2</sup> *וַיָּבֹא מִיָּדָיו וַיִּקְנֶה לְעַצְמוֹ מִקְוֵה אֲחֵרָה מֵהַשָּׁמָיִם מֵהַיָּדָיו* 'immediately he came, he bought for himself a cell in another place a little farther from there', *Histoire*, II, p. 611<sub>1-2</sub>.

<sup>10</sup> SŪRĪN, *Mēmra de-abāhātā*, p. 400<sub>7-8</sub>.

<sup>11</sup> *Statutes*, p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 613.

<sup>13</sup> The text has **𐭪𐭩𐭭𐭩𐭭** Bēt Kafrāiē.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 613.

Hūzāiē and read to the king<sup>15</sup>. In this way the imminent threat was averted.

But setbacks and failures did not dissuade Narsai's adversaries. New plans to trap him were formulated. We hear that accusations of espionage in the interest of Byzantium were fabricated. One of these episodes is recorded. According to this account, some of the citizens of Nisibis denounced him, contending that he hated the Persian empire and was engaged in espionage on behalf of Byzantium<sup>16</sup>. Unfortunately the narrative has been so discolored that it is impossible to separate the elements of truth from the legendary accretions.

## 12. THE TWILIGHT OF NARSAI'S LIFE

How long was Narsai able to serve the School of Nisibis and his church? Of claims, there is no scarcity. Implausible numbers have been given for the duration of his directorship : 50<sup>1</sup>, 45<sup>2</sup>, 40<sup>3</sup> and 30 years<sup>4</sup>. To find a way out of this conundrum is a hopeless task. One thing is clear — we have here to do with a gradual conglomeration of additions inspired by the desire to exaggerate. These traditions grew without control. No one of them is employable as a compass whose accuracy is based on actual and exact knowledge. We are left with guesswork.

Barḥadbešabbā offers exact data about the length of time he stayed at each place and how long he served in every position. According to this Narsai must have reached the age of 103 years. However much Barḥadbešabbā has influenced the scholars and moved them to accept it<sup>5</sup>, it is too neat a picture to be true. This plethora of exact data rules itself out of the court. This chronological sequence runs into insurmountable difficulties. If we follow Barḥadbešabbā,

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 613.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 614.

<sup>1</sup> BAR 'EBRĀIĀ, *Chronicon eccl.*, III, col. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 386.

<sup>3</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 615.

<sup>4</sup> SŪRĪN, *Memrā de-abāhātū*, p. 4007-8.

<sup>5</sup> Under the influence of Scher who accepted these data at face value, *PO*, IX, p. 615 footnote 3.

Narsai's birth would fall somewhere around 400. His period in the school would therefore be between 407 and 416. However it is reported that the years he was at the school fall on a period when persecutions broke out, eventually driving the school to seek security in the mountains for the duration of the period<sup>6</sup>. Since we have no reason to discount the report that these experiences go back to actual happenings and to Narsai himself, this renders Barḥadbešabbā's chronology suspect. At the time under discussion, there was no persecution. On the contrary, it was one of the most pleasant epochs under the rule of the Sassanides. The Christians felt themselves blessed with new opportunities for their work<sup>7</sup>. The eulogy sent to Jazdgard to whom the Christians owed so much<sup>8</sup> amply testifies to this: Jazdgard is called 'blessed' among the rulers<sup>9</sup>. A witness to his gracious and magnanimous attitude towards the Christians is his son Vahram V<sup>10</sup> and indirectly the judgement of the Magi in Isfahani<sup>11</sup> and Firdausi<sup>12</sup>. Thus, it is clear beyond all doubt, that if the time when Narsai was at the school was a period of persecutions, this must have been later and

✱ Barḥadbešabbā's chronology in error.

The only secure avenue is recourse to the official documents of the School of Nisibis itself. According to these texts, Narsai was still in office in 496 A.D. when legislation to regulate the affairs of the institution was introduced. As we have already seen, the preamble relates that these statutes were established in the month of Tešrī qadīm of that year<sup>13</sup>. This is the pivot around which conflicting traditions whirl.

Another possibility allows us to proceed circumspectly. Its basis is not absolutely certain but it is reasonable. This involves the tra-

<sup>6</sup> See page 57 f.

<sup>7</sup> About the joy over the rebuilding of the destroyed churches, the freedom of the Christian confessors, and the security of the church and the *geiāmā*, see *Synodicon orientale*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Anecdota syriaca*, I, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> In his throne - speech, he characterizes the rule of his father as one sustained by an accommodating and good-hearted spirit, ṬABARĪ, *Ta'riḥ ar-rusul*, I, II, p. 865.

<sup>11</sup> *Annals*, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> *Šahnama*, V, p. 493 ff.

<sup>13</sup> See page 93 f.





Elīša's home was a village of Qūzbō in Margā<sup>1</sup> in Bēt 'Arbāiē, and therefore he was called Bar Qūzbāiē. Another form of his name is Elīša<sup>2</sup> 'Arbāiā bar Qōzbānē<sup>2</sup>. The form Mār Qōrbānē<sup>3</sup> is simply a corruption which is, paleographically, easy to understand.

Nothing is known about his life. Of course, he is reported to have been one of those who had been with Narsai at the School of Edessa<sup>7</sup>, and, so to speak, had belonged to the old guard.

Eliša' is portrayed as the metropolitan of Nisibis in the Chronicle of Seert<sup>8</sup> and in Mari<sup>9</sup>. That he obtained this high office in Nisibis as is also accepted by Chabot<sup>10</sup> and others<sup>11</sup> must be dismissed

<sup>2</sup> BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, 620<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>4</sup> BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 620<sub>3-4</sub>.

<sup>6</sup> MEŠĪHĀZEKĀ, *Histoire* XIX, p. 70<sub>20-22</sub>.

<sup>7</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 1264.

<sup>8</sup> This appears in the title of the chapter, *ibid.*, p. 1261. The text of this chapter however does not show this encroachment, but speaks of Elisa' as an 'interpreter' and 'doctor'.

<sup>9</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> *Littérature syriaque*, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> TIXERONT, *Précis de patrologie*, p. 424, identifies Eliša' with Hōše'.

out of hand. There is no doubt that we have to do here with sheer confusion. Obviously Eliša' has been confused with Hōše', metropolitan of Nisibis <sup>12</sup>. This is the more understandable since paleographically there is a great similiarity between both names in the Syriac script. And since the place of activity was the same for both men, such confusion is no surprise. Scher has seen this with clarity — Eliša's person must be divested of this association <sup>13</sup>. The case is patent. As over against the claim of this later source, the ancient sources are matter-of-fact. The Chronicle of Arbēl makes it clear that Eliša' was a doctor and a *mepašqānā* <sup>14</sup>. This is recorded in an equally unequivocal manner in Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān <sup>15</sup> and in Barḥadbešabbā <sup>16</sup>.

Another confusion is even more obvious. It is an old one, which trapped Assemani <sup>17</sup>. He confused this Eliša' with the priest and physician Eliša' who became a partner of Narsai in the schism that resulted in two catholicoi holding office simultaneously. Such an identification is impossible since the fatal election that split the church took place after Eliša's death. This event is placed in the 34th year of the rule of Qawad <sup>18</sup>, that is, in the year 522/23. According to all the reliable elements in the tradition, Eliša', the head of the school, had been dead for over a decade before the church cleavage <sup>19</sup>.

## 2. ELIŠA'S LITERARY ACTIVITY

The only way to get an idea of the stature of the new head of the School of Nisibis is to go through the data on Eliša's literary creation. However there is no reason for rejoicing since these are sometimes a little more than mere titles.

Although Eliša's position put him into the shadow of the renown

<sup>12</sup> CHABOT, *École de Nisibis*, p. 51.

<sup>13</sup> *Écrivains syriens*, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> MEŠIḤĀZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XIX, p. 70<sub>18-21</sub>; XX, p. 73<sub>6</sub>.

<sup>15</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 387<sub>4</sub>.

<sup>16</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 620<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>17</sup> *Bibliotheca orientalis*, III, 1, p. 167.

<sup>18</sup> ELIĀ BAR ŠINAIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, I, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> See page 129 f.



out of hand. There is no doubt that we have to do here with sheer confusion. Obviously Eliša' has been confused with Hōše', metropolitan of Nisibis<sup>12</sup>. This is the more understandable since paleographically there is a great similiarity between both names in the Syriac script. And since the place of activity was the same for both men, such confusion is no surprise. Scher has seen this with clarity — Eliša's person must be divested of this association<sup>13</sup>. The case is patent. As over against the claim of this later source, the ancient sources are matter-of-fact. The Chronicle of Arbēl makes it clear that Eliša' was a doctor and a *mepašqānā*<sup>14</sup>. This is recorded in an equally unequivocal manner in Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān<sup>15</sup> and in Barḥadbešabbā<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> CHABOT, *École de Nisibis*, p. 51.

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<sup>14</sup> MEŠIḤĀZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XIX, p. 70<sub>18-21</sub>; XX, p. 73<sub>6</sub>.

<sup>15</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 387<sub>4</sub>.

<sup>16</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 620<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>17</sup> *Bibliotheca orientalis*, III, 1, p. 167.

<sup>18</sup> ELIḤĀ BAR ŠĪNAIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, I, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> See page 129 f.

His forte was the field of biblical exegesis. While Barḥadbešabbā speaks of his commentaries in a general way<sup>4</sup>, Barḥadbešabbā and Ḥolwān claims that Eliša's accomplishments in this area were so extensive that his work covered all the books of the Old Testament. The statement, unhappily, is not made with that desirable clarity which would give us an unequivocal meaning. Eliša is reported to have produced : 'Commentaries of all the books of the Old (Testament) according to the Syriac language'<sup>5</sup>. Though we are grateful to have more than just a title 'commentaries', we cannot be entirely at peace. It seems that the description refers not just to commentaries but also to their basis, which would in this case be the Peshitta and not the Septuagint text that was employed by Theodore of Mopsuestia<sup>6</sup>. One question comes up. Could we not understand this in the sense of the Massorah of the Old Testament in consequence of which this work would not be understood to

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 620<sub>4-5</sub>.

<sup>4</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 620<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>8</sup> *Revue de l'enseignement primaire*, p. 387.

<sup>6</sup> However it must be observed that in the translation of the works of Theodore, a biblical text in Greek was not always translated *ad hoc* but was replaced by Syriac texts that had endeared themselves to the Syrians, cf. VÖÖBUS, *History of the Gospel Text*, p. 188 f.

mean a series of commentaries but as creating a 'tradition'?? Although one cannot give preference to this thought, nevertheless the possibility remains on the horizon. Interestingly, the manuscript tradition regarding the *mašlemānūtā* is itself not unanimous. The plural reading, in addition to the edited text, is supported only by one other witness<sup>8</sup>. The singular which would be most fitting for the latter possibility emerges in a different recension<sup>9</sup>, and it is found also in a manuscript that once existed in the Orient<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, the origin of the Syriac Massorah is ascribed not to Eliša', but to scholars of a later time<sup>11</sup>.

If the reference is to the commentaries, we should probably take this statement *cum grano salis*. In any case, commentaries on Old Testament books were known to the readers of later centuries. Direct mention has been made about his commentaries on Joshua, Judges and Job<sup>12</sup>. The latter also appears in 'Abdīšō'<sup>13</sup>.

In addition to these works in the service of the biblical exegesis, Eliša' is credited with the completion of a work composed by Theodore of Mopsuestia: 'And he completed (the commentary) on Samuel composed by the Interpreter, according to a request'<sup>14</sup>. The statement is enigmatic. It is not clear whether this means that Eliša' brought an unfinished commentary composed by Theodore to its fulfilment, or that he completed this commentary in Syriac the translation of which was incomplete. The latter meaning deserves preference<sup>15</sup>.

Appended to these exegetical writings is another work. Judging

<sup>7</sup> The term, *ܡܬܬܬܝܠܐ*, in the first place means 'handing down', 'tradition', 'translation' and then 'commentary'.

<sup>8</sup> Ms. Šarf. Patr. 80, fol. 29b.

<sup>9</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 547.

<sup>10</sup> A manuscript that existed in the church of Gūrīā in the diocese of Seert, cf. SCHER, *PO*, IV, p. 319.

<sup>11</sup> See page 196 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 1271.

<sup>13</sup> *Catalogus librorum* XC, p. 166.

<sup>14</sup> *وتمام شموئيل بعد الدعاء الذي عمله المفشقان* *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 1271.

<sup>15</sup> A commentary on Samuel appears in the catalogue of the works of Theodore in the Chronicle of Seert, *Histoire nestorienne*, V, p. 289.

from the brief title, it seems to have been an explication of selected passages of difficulty in the Book of Kings <sup>16</sup>.

We are not allowed to see and examine Eliša's work in biblical exegesis. Virtually everything has perished. A few shreds have survived in Īšō'dād of Merv, in his commentary on Job <sup>17</sup>. Obviously, his work in the area of hermeneutics has been overshadowed by the contributions of other men who were destined to occupy the chair of the *mepašqānā* in the same school.

Eliša's accomplishment in biblical exegesis in the field of the New Testament is much less clear. The Chronicle of Seert claims that Eliša wrote commentaries on all the letters of the Corpus Paulinum <sup>18</sup>. If this were true, it would be strange that Barhad-bešabbā of Ḥolwān, who in affirming that the commentaries spanned all of the Old Testament, would remain silent about his work on the entire Pauline corpus. This cannot be accidental, unless Barhadbešabbā was much more careless a writer than we have any reason to claim. A cycle of commentaries was known to 'Abdišō who specially refers to the two commentaries on the Corinthians, and then to commentaries on Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians <sup>19</sup>.

In the field of theology, one work was accorded laudation. Since it is an accomplishment of unusual character we are allowed to learn more about circumstances surrounding it and even about its content. The Chronicle of Seert tells that it was prepared at the request of Catholicos Aqāq as a document to be presented to King Qawad. This was done to comply with the order of the ruler that every cult society existing in his empire was to submit a document explaining their tenets and beliefs. Catholicos Aqāq assumed the task of translating Eliša's work from Syriac into Persian <sup>20</sup>. The same is briefly recorded by Mari <sup>21</sup>. This work was a presentation

<sup>16</sup> ومعاني سفر الملوك 'and the meanings of the book of the Kings', *ibid.*, p. 1272.

<sup>17</sup> *Kommentar zum Buche Hiob*, p. 69, 75.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1269.

<sup>19</sup> ܐܢܬܝܟܝܢ ܕܬܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܬܐ 'the Corinthian Epistles and the three epistles that (come) after them', *Catalogus librorum*, XC, p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 46.

of Christian theology, of the reality as well as the orthodoxy of the Christian religion and was cast in 38 chapters. The content is described as follows: 'Divine essence, the Trinity, creation, hexaemeron, the creation of man, the creation of angels, the fall of Satan, and the coming of Our Lord at the end of times'<sup>22</sup>. Our source, however, makes a mistake by stating that Eliša' composed this work at the time he was the interpreter<sup>23</sup>, i.e. the *mepašqānā*<sup>24</sup> of the School of Nisibis. He may have been a teacher in the School of Nisibis at that time but hardly the interpreter. For, if the work was made at the request of Catholicos Aqāq, as our source claims, then it must have been composed before 496, the year of Aqāq's death<sup>25</sup> and after the year 488, the enthronement of Qawad<sup>26</sup>.

Elīša' was also active in the terrain of polemical and apologetic theology. Here he fought on two fronts. At least one writing was directed against the Magi. Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān describes this as 'an explanation of the questions<sup>27</sup> of magianism'<sup>28</sup> which Barḥadbešabbā explains a little more adequately: 'He resolved questions<sup>29</sup> which the Magi raised — those which are against us'<sup>30</sup>. The word that describes the title can also be rendered 'repudiation'.

According to Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān, Eliša' wrote against the heretics<sup>31</sup>. These 'heretics' are not specified but there can be little doubt that this writing was directly against the arch-heretics — the Monophysites and their propaganda.

وتكلم فيها على الجوهر الالهي وعلى التثليث وما خلق في الستة الايام<sup>22</sup> وصنعة الانسان وخلق الملائكة وهبوط الشيطان ومجي سيدنا آخر الزمان

*Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 126<sub>6-8</sub>.

<sup>23</sup> المفسر بنصيبين 'the interpreter in Nisibis', *ibid.*, p. 1264.

<sup>24</sup> The Arabic word is the counterpart for the Syriac *mepašqānā*, cf. MANNA, *Vocabulaire chaldéen*, p. 620.

<sup>25</sup> He died in the year 807 A.G., i.e. 496, 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> Qawad I ruled from 488 until 531.

27 **ζήτημα.**

<sup>28</sup> *ῥῥῥῥῥῥ ῥῥῥῥῥ ῥῥῥῥ* *Fondation des écoles*, p. 387g.

29 ζήτημα.

<sup>30</sup> *تاريخ ابن خلدون*, Histoire, II, 620<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>31</sup> *Kaṭṭim laddala kaṇḍarika* 'and a disputation against the heretics', *Fondation des écoles*, p. 387<sub>6</sub>.

Another note on Eliša's literary activity in the field of polemical theology stating that he wrote against impiety<sup>32</sup> is too vague for us to judge whether it simply includes the two works just mentioned or whether the author had some other writings in mind.

Eliša' expanded the scope of literary creativity in the School of Nisibis by producing studies inspired by an historical interest. The publication of a work on the founding of the schools was a memorable event in the advancement of literary culture in this center of learning. It broke new ground, inspiring others to fertilize this branch. This is a work which so far as we know is the first of its kind and it stimulated much interest.

Its full title is given in the Chronicle of Seert as the 'Cause of the Foundation of Schools'<sup>33</sup>. This work is included by 'Abdišō' in the list of Eliša's works but under the shorter title as 'the Cause of the Foundations'<sup>34</sup>. It so appears in the manuscript used by Assemani<sup>35</sup> and in other manuscripts<sup>36</sup>.

Perhaps his work about the martyrs belongs to the same category of writings. The title, preserved only in 'Abdišō'<sup>37</sup>, does not permit us more information about its nature. Whether it was a collection of narratives about the martyrs or a more general presentation of the martyrs, must remain open.

Nor was the field which his great predecessor had cherished and cultivated, neglected by the man who was in the main interested in new avenues and in the cultivation of new terrain. While our information is very limited regarding Eliša's literary creation, we know much less about this segment. 'Abdišō' registers 'thanksgiving hymns'<sup>38</sup> apparently created for liturgical use at the end of the Eucharistic celebration. The character of the *mēmre*<sup>39</sup> is obscure.

Though much is hidden from our eyes and so little is left with

<sup>32</sup> ܠܥܡܠܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ 'and he reproved the impiety', SŪRĪN, *Mēmra de-abāhātā*, p. 400<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> ܐܘܬܪܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ, *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 127<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>34</sup> ܐܘܬܪܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ *Catalogus librorum*, XC, p. 167.

<sup>35</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 456. This codex is now lost.

<sup>36</sup> See 'ABDIŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum* XC, ed. VÖÖBUS.

<sup>37</sup> ܐܘܬܪܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ, 'and of the martyrs', *Catalogus librorum*, XC, p. 167.

<sup>38</sup> ܐܘܬܪܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ, *ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>39</sup> ܐܘܬܪܐ ܕܥܡܠܐ, *ibid.*, p. 167.





First we are reminded of certain unfavorable impressions obtained from closer acquaintance with the chapters in the Church History of the Presbyter and *Mepašqānā* Barḥadbešabbā. And since no other source wants to rescue his report from isolation, one could find enough reason not to take this tradition seriously. On the other hand, however, it must be said that Barḥadbešabbā's presentation suggests reasons for our pondering. A priori one could feel that there is some appeal in this picture of affairs. Prima facie evidence seems to point toward that kind of difficult situation which over against the other presentation in its smooth dress, is quite attractive. It does not seem plausible for anyone to want to cast a discrediting shadow on the memory of such a celebrated man as Abraham, unless there was a compelling reason. It would have had to be an historical fact. As we shall see, such unpleasant experiences had actually taken place<sup>17</sup>.

One could also well imagine that what Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān tells us, is fully indicative of the way difficult and unpleasant memories would recede in order to give place to a more serene picture, free of strife and wrestling. Seen from this angle, we could understand why attempts were undertaken to remove from the tradition the unpleasant episode which actually took place. The vacillation that places Eliša' either before or after Abraham, would then hint at the solution. Should we not therefore come to the conclusion that the history of these traditions proceeds from the sequence, Abraham-Eliša'-Abraham, to, Eliša'-Abraham and not in reverse order?

Up to this point we find ourselves still in the region of uncertainty. Some considerations plead strongly for the position of Barḥadbšabbā of Ḥolwān, others for that of his opponent. Thus only close scrutiny of the sources can rescue us from this dilemma. However tempting the a priori considerations are, even as an ideal case for the prosecution of criticism without bothering with questions of source critical complexity, nevertheless a careful look cries out for caution. If we keep our eye on the texts, restraints must be put on the wings of imagination.

First of all an analysis reveals that the source which charms

<sup>17</sup> See page 150 ff.

us with its nonconformist outlook, has serious flaws. Moreover, it commits a gross blunder with respect to the unpleasant events during Abraham's directorship. The fact of these difficulties cannot be disputed but we must reject its report of the outcome. It has confused Eliša' with another person, Jōhannān of Bēt Rabban, who was appointed Abraham's assistant or even co-administrator<sup>18</sup>. This Jōhannān is completely ignored here. This is a serious blunder indeed. Such an error inspires no confidence in his report of other circumstances.

A supplementary warning issues from the critique with which Barḥadbešabbā's account was received by Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān<sup>19</sup>. This more matter-of-fact treatment seems to reveal a better knowledge of these affairs. Nothing less than serious reasons would have permitted this corrective which sets the period of Eliša' right and dissociates him from the actions of disobedience against Abraham.

Finally, the earliest source at our disposal, namely the Chronicle of Arbēl, is waiting in the wings. Until we have proof to the contrary, a source written at a time when Abraham was still alive<sup>20</sup>, standing very close to the events here related, naturally must play a key rôle in any critique. Its witness goes hand in hand with the criticism by Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān.

The result has been reached after close and careful inquiry though the pendulum has swung from this side to that and back again. In our judgement its plumb line favors one side. We feel ourselves driven to the conclusion in the light of that certainty which critical sholarship can muster via the texts at our disposal — Eliša' was the man upon whose shoulders the mantle of founder and first director of the School of Nisibis fell.

#### 4. CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān tells that Eliša's period in office was

<sup>18</sup> See page 211 ff.

<sup>19</sup> See page 129.

<sup>20</sup> MEŠIḤĀZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XX, p. 73.



The third director of the School of Nisibis was Abraham de-Bēt Rabban. Concerning his person, there has been much confusion especially in regard to his identification. He is not to be confused with a bishop of Bēt Rabban<sup>1</sup>, since the director Abraham was, in the scale of the hierarchy, ranked no higher than a presbyter. To connect his name 'Bēt Rabban' with the Monastery of Bēt Rabban in Dasen<sup>2</sup>, founded by Mešihāzekā<sup>3</sup>, is also erroneous<sup>4</sup>. This establishment belongs to a later time. This is a confusion for which Assemani provided the unfortunate occasion<sup>5</sup>.

Our sources about the life and work of a later successor of Narsai are most limited. Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān is very abrupt in his remarks<sup>6</sup>. Another recension of this work gains no ground either<sup>7</sup>. Another Barḥadbešabbā however comes to our aid. In his historical work he has devoted an entire section namely chapter 23 to this man. It is dedicated to him, bearing the title : ‘The history of the actions of Mār Abraham, the presbyter and the *mespašqānā* of the divine books’<sup>8</sup>.

While one source is silent about all this<sup>9</sup>, and another simply names him 'a friend of Mār Narsai'<sup>10</sup>, others claim that he was

<sup>2</sup> Called the Monastery of Bēt Rabban Zekaišō' or, simply, Bēt Rabban.

<sup>3</sup> He was a monk in the Monastery of Mount Iḏlā, THOMAS OF MARGĀ, *Historia monastica*, I, 4; II, 23, p. 23, 97.

<sup>4</sup> LEVENE, *Early Syrian Fathers*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Bibliotheca orientalis*, III, p. 631.

<sup>6</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 387 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 547. The codex is defective, its last part is lost.

<sup>8</sup> קַמְלֵךְ קָצֶה וּבְחִינַת מַעֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וְאֶרֶץ, וְכֹל מַדְבָּר וְקִישֻׁט  
Histoire, II, p. 616 ff.

<sup>9</sup> *Integra narratio*, p. 35 f.

<sup>10</sup> ܡܫܝܗܙܝܩܐ, MEŠĪHĀZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XX, p. 739.

a relative of Narsai<sup>11</sup>. Another source suggests that Abraham was a relative on the side of one of Narsai's sisters<sup>12</sup>. His original name was actually Narsai. His home was in the same place in the country of Ma'altā as in the case of Narsai his uncle, and his cradle had stood in the same village of 'Ain Dulbā. This is by the way also the reason why he appears in the sources as Abraham de-Bēt Rabban<sup>13</sup>, i.e. Abraham 'of the House of our Master'. The time of his birth is not known. Scher's suggestion — the year 449 A.D.<sup>14</sup> — is based on faulty chronological considerations. Of his parents only the name of his father, Bar Sahdē, has escaped oblivion<sup>15</sup>.

We are told that when Narsai was a boy of 15 years of age he felt the call to higher service. He thereupon abandoned his interests in worldly pursuits and devoted himself entirely to the spiritual life. He felt an awakening of his interest by the work of his great uncle, a man of fame, who nurtured his desires and aspirations until his decision had matured and ripened sufficiently that his life was to be enriched by that man's instruction<sup>16</sup>. The dreams of the boy were indeed materialized — his father brought him to Narsai in Nisibis<sup>17</sup>. This in turn brought about a change in his life. Not only that it also involved a change in his name from Narsai to Abraham<sup>18</sup>. This became ominous for a far deeper change he was destined to undergo. From that time forward the life of this lad became most intimately associated with that of Narsai. He appears as the one with whom Narsai shared his room<sup>19</sup>. Narsai also took care of his education and development. In fact the very one who was destined to succeed Narsai in taking over the leadership of the school grew up under the guidance of his hands<sup>20</sup>. The lad is said to have occasioned great joy to Narsai by his zeal

<sup>11</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 387; *Histoire*, II, p. 616.

<sup>12</sup> MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܒܝܬ ܪܒܒܢ

<sup>14</sup> See, BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 616, footnote 1; p. 630, footnote 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 616<sub>4-5</sub>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 616.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 616; cf. *Fondation des écoles*, p. 388.

<sup>18</sup> ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܒܝܬ ܪܒܒܢ ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܒܝܬ ܪܒܒܢ 'there should be no two Narsais in one cell', *Histoire*, II, p. 616<sub>11</sub>.

<sup>19</sup> ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܒܝܬ ܪܒܒܢ 'son of his room', *Fondation des écoles*, p. 387<sub>9</sub>-388<sub>1</sub>.

<sup>20</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 617.

and eagerness in studies wherein he surpassed all others of his age<sup>21</sup>. He was also respected for other personal qualities by the community<sup>22</sup>. His achievements in discipline and mortification, in chastising his body by means of fasting, work and vigils brought him additional admiration<sup>23</sup>.

## 2. ABRAHAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO TEACHING

The chronological side of Abraham's directorship is shrouded in darkness. At what point in time he took over the leadership of the School of Nisibis is not known. When his great uncle closed his eyes for the final time, Abraham must still have been quite young. This is so even if his induction did not take place immediately after 510 A.D., when the second director died, but some years later. This also comes within the realm of possibility.

So far as we are able to judge from the sources at our disposal this school got an unusual man for the chair of the *mepašqānā* in the person of Abraham. In the memory of the tradition, he has been recorded as a gifted pedagogue with extraordinary faculties who in several respects even surpassed his great predecessor. The recollection of the new stimuli that the school received from him finds a sympathetic vibration in the estimate other authors have given him with sentiments of awe and admiration. As sketched in the Chronicle of Arbēl, for example, he appears as 'an ardent man, valiant worker, wise<sup>1</sup> in the wisdom of the fear of God, and an investigator of the divine Scriptures'<sup>2</sup>. Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān offers a eulogy that summarizes the contribution of Abraham to teaching in this statement: 'The entire country of the Persians has been illuminated through his instruction'<sup>3</sup>.

It is the other Barḥadbešabbā who includes two paragraphs about Abraham's achievements in his work. He even there records some

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 617<sub>4-5</sub>.

<sup>22</sup> It is reported that owing to his deep sense of humility he was known throughout the whole community as the second Moses, *ibid.*, p. 617<sub>5-7</sub>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 617, 619.

<sup>1</sup> The word means also 'intelligent', 'endowed with reason'.

<sup>2</sup> ܐܡܪ ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܡܥܠܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ : ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ : ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ  
ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ, MEŠIḤĀZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XX, p. 737-8.

<sup>3</sup> ܕܝܡܝ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 389<sub>8</sub>.

concrete features which we need most urgently in order to provide something substantial to undergird the praises so lavishly spent on this man. According to the first of these, he brought new excitement to the chair of the *mepašqānū*. Through his faculties, particularly by the gift of clarity, his elegance of expression<sup>4</sup>, and the refinement and excellency of his presentation he was able to stimulate, if not indeed to galvanize, instructional process<sup>5</sup>.

The second paragraph allows us to take a somewhat closer glimpse at his pedagogical sensitivity coupled with the application of his talents. This is in connection with his concern for the students having difficulties with the works that were basic in the requirements of the curriculum. These were namely the Syriac translations of the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia which were normative but which in the practical sense presented great difficulties to students who sought to understand them<sup>6</sup>. The reasons for this are described in the following way : 'Besides they were complicated by the Greek and obscure owing to the loftiness of the style of that man and (his) interpreters<sup>7</sup> afterwards'<sup>8</sup>. As the last reference indicates, nothing had been undertaken to smoothen out the artificial linguistic elements in the theological jargon introduced by the translators. It was a great advancement in the instruction given and also a relief for the students when he made particular efforts to make the translation of Syriac more palatable to the students. The text at this point is not too clear particularly in detail but it is quite plain that Abraham utilized every means

<sup>4</sup> ṣāḥib al-kalām ṣāḥib 'the elegant composition of his word'; *Histoire*, II, p. 630<sub>13</sub>.

[illegible]

<sup>6</sup> אנשׁל רבין אמרלע קען נישט זיין וואס  
 רעכטן מ'האט קיין צו. דאס 'for he saw that it was  
 very difficult for many of the brothers to find the meaning of the Scriptures from  
 the reading of the volumes of the Interpreter', *ibid.*, p. 6225-6.

<sup>7</sup> The word is ambiguous and can also mean 'translators'.

<sup>8</sup> : תיכיל מללל דאחי מ חסדא כסוד יחידא , מ , יחידא  
 יחידא , *ibid.*, p. 622<sub>8-8</sub>.



compelled the community of the town to look up to him with sentiments of respect and reverence<sup>15</sup>. Even a legendary halo has been woven around his person so that he has become revered as a thaumaturge in the circles of the common people<sup>16</sup>.

Coupled with his piety, his stature as an eminent man reached the height of the coryphaei the School of Nisibis could call its own<sup>17</sup>. His fame extended beyond the boundaries of his church and Iranian Christianity. Barḥadbešabbā, in discussing his rôle, does not neglect to add that Abraham was known within the domain of the Byzantium as well<sup>18</sup>.

### 3. ABRAHAM'S CONTRIBUTION IN THE LITERARY FIELD

Barḥadbešabbā, who furnishes us with so much data about Abraham's activities, almost leaves us high and dry on this question. He has only a very general remark that Abraham had written many works in the area of exposition<sup>1</sup>, but leaves us otherwise almost completely dissatisfied. However, we are fortunate that we can turn to other sources.

All the information that has been preserved in other sources is unanimous that Abraham's exegetical works were restricted entirely to the Old Testament area. In reference to that section which contains the historical books, his commentaries on Joshua and Judges have received attestation in several sources<sup>2</sup>. That he also wrote a commentary on the book of Kings has been confirmed<sup>3</sup>. In the part dealing with the Ketubim, the tradition knows about his commentary on the Song of Songs<sup>4</sup>. In the area of the apocrypha, his commentary on Bar Sirach is very well

<sup>15</sup> He is reported to have been respected even among the pagans and the Jews in the city community; it is even told that they were accustomed to confirm their oaths by solemnly invoking his name, *ibid.*, p. 621<sub>9-10</sub>.

<sup>16</sup> Pieces of cloth that had been in contact with his body were regarded in the community as *būrkātā*, *ibid.*, p. 621<sub>11-13</sub>.

<sup>17</sup> VÖÖBUS, *Abraham de-Bēt Rabban's Rôle*, p. 204 f.

<sup>18</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 389<sub>9-10</sub>; IBN AṬ-ṬAIYIB, *Fiḥ an-naṣrānīya*, II, p. 160.

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 622<sub>8-9</sub>.

<sup>2</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 389<sub>3-4</sub>; *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116; 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LV, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71; *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116; 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LV, p. 71.

attested<sup>5</sup>. Abraham found additional inspiration for his literary creation in the prophetic books. Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān speaks generally of his commentaries on the prophets but places these works in the first place before mentioning any other commentaries<sup>6</sup>. We are not entirely bereft of still more adequate data about the best of some of these. We learn that his commentary on Isaiah<sup>7</sup> consisted of two volumes<sup>8</sup>. Other commentaries, which are registered in the tradition, are Ezekiel<sup>9</sup>, Daniel<sup>10</sup> and the cycle of the minor prophets<sup>11</sup>.

Not a single exegetical work has survived. We thus have no means of learning in what way Abraham succeeded in improving instruction with respect to the interpretation of Theodore's tradition. We also are left without means of appraising the value of all the traditions we have just enumerated. It is quite possible that they are not complete<sup>12</sup>. However, that his exegetical work was an important contribution is exhibited by the compendia of the East Syrian exegetical traditions that rest on the best which tradition has produced. And among them is Abraham's work.

The only exponents of Abraham's hermeneutical skill and craftsmanship are in the remains embedded in the repertoires of the East Syrian exegesis. These are but splinters. In a repertory which includes the exegetical works of the great luminaries in this discipline, Abraham appears as the most frequently quoted authority on the Pentateuch<sup>13</sup>.

Outside of this source the occasions, rare in number, for excising other splinters and bringing them into the field of our vision, appear in the works of Īšō'dād of Merv. Here occasionally other traces of the commentaries on the Pentateuch<sup>14</sup> and that on

<sup>5</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 3894; *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116; 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LV, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 3894.

<sup>7</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sub>1</sub>.

<sup>8</sup> ܐܒܕܝܫܐ ܕܝܫܐ, 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LV, p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116; 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LV, p. 71;

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71; *Histoire nestorienne*, p. 116.

<sup>12</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 58 contains a commentary on the Psalms; this work quotes Abraham who seems to be Abraham of Bēth Rabban.

<sup>13</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553; cf. Ms. Vat. syr. 578.

<sup>14</sup> *Commentaire*, II, p. 76.

Samuel<sup>15</sup> emerge. Some vestiges of a work on the Psalms have been salvaged by an anonymous commentary<sup>16</sup>. Occasional splinters have been included also in the exegetical work of Ishāq Šebadnāiā<sup>17</sup>.

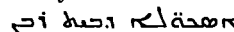
We must be content with the very regrettable situation that one part of Abraham's legacy in the exegetical traditions cannot be identified more precisely. It is, no doubt, preserved in the tradition which has been kept and delivered throughout the centuries fused into that stratum of tradition labeled only as 'all the school of Bēt Rabban'<sup>18</sup>, 'the doctors of the school'<sup>19</sup>, and 'the traditions of the ancient doctors'<sup>20</sup>.

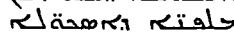
Perhaps even more can be learned. In the anonymous commentary a frequently consulted authority is introduced with the reference to 'Rabban'<sup>21</sup>. It seems that this 'Rabban' was no one else but Abraham. The clue to this lies in a passage which is discussed in the light of the history of exegesis<sup>22</sup>. The chain of the tradition is introduced in such a way that the identity of the Rabban is indicated. In connection with this introduction, Jōḥannān of Bēt Rabban is presented first. Then it is said that Jōḥannān's view differs from that of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Finally it is stated that 'our Rabban' agrees with him. Since this 'Rabban' cannot be Theodore or Jōḥannān, the only candidate left is Abraham. His contribution was so important and his authority so eminent that in this domain, he could have been known by the simple designation, 'Rabban'<sup>23</sup>.

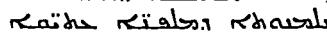
<sup>15</sup> Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. syr. 10, fol. 188b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 4524, fol. 135a.

<sup>16</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 58, fol. 17b.

<sup>17</sup> Ms. Seert 121; cf. SCHER, *Catalogue*, p. 87. However my notes on Ms. Bagd. 6024, Ms. Vat. syr. 592 and Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9358 do not include Abraham's name.

<sup>18</sup>  Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 12, fol. 10a.

<sup>19</sup>  IŠŌ'DĀD, *Commentaries*, III, p. 210.

<sup>20</sup>  Ms. Vat. syr. 592, fol. 49b; cf. Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9358, fol. 34a.

<sup>21</sup> It means 'our master'.

<sup>22</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 23b.

<sup>23</sup> Van den Eynde has identified the 'Rabban' with Gabri'el of Qaṭar, IŠŌ'DĀD, *Commentaire*, II, p. IX f. The same identification has been suggested by JANSMA, *Investigations*, p. 87 f. However the question cannot be regarded as settled since there are serious difficulties which cannot be ignored. It is not established that Gabri'el Qaṭrāiā produced any exegetical works at all, cf. 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, CI, p. 172 f. Only if this Gabri'el can be identified with Gabri'el Ariā do we have here an

We are also informed that this Abraham advanced the scope of his literary creation in the tradition of the school in another way. He provided a stimulus for studies of an historical nature, for that genre of literature which captivates our particular interest. The work is entitled: 'The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools'<sup>24</sup>. As we have already seen this is a special genre of literary interest having no parallel among the West Syrians but being particularly marked in the East Syrian milieu. The same work listed in 'Abdišō' appears under a slightly different title. In Assemani's edition, it is corrupt and means something quite different. This was not his fault<sup>25</sup> but is an error that sometimes appears

author who wrote on selected sections of biblical books, *ibid.*, LXXXI, p. 153, but was not remembered as a great authority in exegetical studies. This identification itself is questionable. To be sure the *Gannat būssāmē* does make the identification but in that case it is strange that 'Abdišō' does not introduce the author of exegetical work as Qaṭrāiā, i.e. by the name which occurs in the exegetical tradition, as we would expect. In comparison with Gabri'el of Qaṭar Aḥōb Qaṭrāiā would be a far better candidate as an exegete from Qaṭar, *ibid.* CVII, p. 175.

Considering all the factors, the identification of the 'Rabban' with Abraham is still the most natural as far as we can judge on the basis of the data at our disposal. We should not forget how the author of this commentary in the prefatory note describes the nature of his work. He states that his commentary is based on the ancient Syrian exegetical work and primarily on the traditions of the School of Nisibis. He explicitly mentions besides Ephrēm the luminaries of the School of Nisibis, and is satisfied to refer to others with the incidental phrase: 'and of other teachers', Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 1a. But since Abraham occupies the most important place among these luminaries the author cannot have contradicted himself by actually referring to him only occasionally.

Another observation can be made. The term 'Rabban' appears in the anonymous commentary on the Prophet Isaiah about a dozen times, Ms. Bagd. 113, fol. 271b - 296 b. This situation is the more ostentatious since 'Rabban' appears in the commentaries on other prophets only sporadically. This fact reminds us that on Isaiah there existed an extensive commentary composed by Abraham in two volumes. This literary fact seems to be echoed in the quotations by the epithet 'Rabban' which would be very natural. As such this observation seems to be something more substantial in the labyrinth of uncertainties.

There are uncertainties in the interpretation of some data which cannot be ignored. Traditions have been fused so that older traditions were quoted under the names of later tradents. Therefore caution is necessary. The epithet 'Rabban' may not refer to one and the same author in all the exegetical works under discussion.

<sup>24</sup> وكلامًا على ترتيب الموتب في الاسكول *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 1162.

<sup>25</sup> However we cannot control the codex since Ms. Vat. syr. 456, the basis for this edition, is lost.

in the manuscripts<sup>26</sup>. The correct title is: 'The Cause of the Foundation through Summary Chapters'<sup>27</sup>, as the better manuscript tradition has preserved it<sup>28</sup>.

Concerning the corpus of his letters<sup>29</sup>, we can only say that they appear to have had considerable significance<sup>30</sup>.

The field in which his great uncle was at home was not his forte. His accomplishments in the poetical field were modest. Nor have all our sources preserved any recollection about this material. What he did compose belongs to the genre of *mēmre*<sup>31</sup>. The reference that he also composed *madrāšē* most probably rests upon a corruption of the text<sup>32</sup>. A shred of his poetical creation, namely a *tešbūhtā*, has escaped oblivion owing to the fact that it found refuge in a liturgical manual<sup>33</sup>.

#### 4. ABRAHAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXPANSION OF THE SCHOOL

The school blossomed under Abraham's directorship to such a degree that it experienced a real metamorphosis and that in various directions. The student-body grew out of the size it had taken under Narsai and reached its peak. Barhadbešabbā reports that the community of the students passed the number one thousand<sup>1</sup>. For this, we have also the witness of other sources, for example, the Chronicle of Seert<sup>2</sup> and also an anonymous source<sup>3</sup>. But whether these have any independent value or are dependent upon Barhadbešabbā can no longer be determined. In view of this tremendous growth, steps had to be taken in order to meet the needs of the

<sup>26</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 176, fol. 32b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 4526, fol. 43b.

<sup>27</sup> ܠܬܝܬܝܢ ܠܬܝܬܝܢ ܠܬܝܬܝܢ ܠܬܝܬܝܢ ܠܬܝܬܝܢ

<sup>28</sup> Ms. Borg. syr. 1; fol. 198b; Ms. Borg. syr. 34, fol. 116a; Ms. Borg. syr. 38, fol. 49b; Ms. Par. syr. 315, fol. 59a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 4069, fol. 112a.

<sup>29</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116.

<sup>30</sup> Here Abraham's letters are introduced even before his historical work.

<sup>31</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>32</sup> See footnote 25.

<sup>33</sup> Namely for the night of Monday, Ms. Bagd. 180, fol. 130a; Ms. Par. syr. 24, fol. 121b, 122a.

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 620<sub>11</sub>.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> About an anonymous hymn on Narsai and his disciples, found in a liturgical manuscript, see the reference by SCHER, *ibid.*, p. 116, footnote 4.







chairs in question and the surplus was destined to meet the expenses relative to the maintenance of the hospice <sup>23</sup>.

## 5. LEGISLATION

The increase in the size of the community necessitated not only enlargement and improvement of facilities, as well as some implementation in the area of instruction, but also required intensive efforts to meet pressing educational tasks. In these efforts of Abraham, one attempt is not buried under the mists of history. It is that which speaks of his efforts to stiffen the lines of administrative concern and to impose stricter discipline upon the school.

The Chronicle of Arbēl has a paragraph on the subject of Abraham's legislation. According to the remarks prefixed to it, the new situation of the school had produced some problems which had made these steps more imperative : 'But in order that a man would not think himself to be wiser than he is, would not become puffed up, and boast and attain pride — the mother of (every) harm — the *maqreīānē* and the *mehageiānē* of the school were gathered and in the meeting they had arranged, proper canons were set up for the *rabbaitā*'<sup>1</sup>. Some caution is necessary since the author tells us something that is not quite so. He is himself mistaken<sup>2</sup>. The canons were not new but had belonged to the predecessor. The characteristics briefly given 'for the *rabbaitā*' show that this is the case<sup>3</sup>.

We are most fortunate in that we are able to glean somewhat more in regard to the action in question. The legislative sources, those which have emanated from the official channels of the school's administration, assist us in placing the action of Abraham within the proper perspective. We are privileged to have access to this

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 624<sub>3-4</sub>.

[illegible]

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the author had seen the statutes of the School of Nisibis without the proem, and so the canons together with the appendix could have left this erroneous impression.

<sup>3</sup> A number of canons at the beginning of the cycle deal only with the duties of the *rabbaitā*. The same is the case with the concluding canons.



## 6. DIFFICULTIES AND TRIALS

Abraham's work in all these areas was beset by difficulties. Indeed we may characterize them as trials. An anonymous source calls them storms<sup>1</sup>. Barḥadbešabbā calls them wars or battles<sup>2</sup>, and he then goes on to say that he cannot tell the whole story but must limit himself only to some of the episodes. His report depicts an atmosphere that was anything but congenial for the work in which the director of the school and his co-workers were engaged. Time after time one saw the eruption of hysterical outbursts. Chicanery and intrigue were rampant. Accusations of the most vicious kind were hurled against Abraham. He was charged with secret idolatry<sup>3</sup>, the causes of the turmoil in the town were laid at his door<sup>4</sup>. Even more dangerous methods were employed when charges were laid before the *marzban* that Abraham was responsible for the troubles on the frontier<sup>5</sup>. Occasionally the context of affairs seems to have been so serious that he was left alone with no one daring to come to his aid<sup>6</sup>.

What was the reason for such a situation, which undoubtedly made the work of the school difficult and subjected it to creeping paralysis?

The Chronicle of Arbēl would like us to believe that this was caused by internal matters. It argues that a disquieting unrest had been excited by unsatisfactory administration of the possessions of the school<sup>7</sup>. This would have happened near the beginning of Abraham's administration and could have been due to his lack of experience<sup>8</sup>. This is supposed to have occasioned alarm outside the

<sup>1</sup> ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ, *Integra narratio*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ 'the battles that were raised against him', *Histoire*, II, p. 624<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 624 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 626<sub>7-16</sub>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 625<sub>10-11</sub>. He is reported against all hopes to have escaped the trap laid for him.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 626<sub>11-12</sub>.

<sup>7</sup> ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ 'for a disorder had arisen in the school because of the bad administration of its earthly possession', MEŠIḤĀZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XX, p. 73<sub>18-74</sub><sub>1</sub>.

<sup>8</sup> It is said here that ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ ܡܫܝܚܐܝܬܐ 'because of the shortness of his years' Jōhannān of Bēt Rabbān was given to him as an aid, *ibid.*, p. 73<sub>16-18</sub>.

walls of the institution. So we find that Ḥenānā, bishop of Arbēl, is reported to have hastened to Nisibis in order to give his assistance in the emergency situation<sup>9</sup>. We have no reason to doubt that such an unhappy situation caused discontent. However this is not sufficient for an adequate answer. Either this chronicler wants to cover up the actual circumstances or, the more difficult of the choices for us, he had no knowledge of the true circumstances.

Other data about Abraham lend themselves to the idea that he might at least in part have been to blame for the difficulties in which he found himself. Some of these leave us with the impression that Abraham exhibited an attitude of intolerance and aggressiveness particularly in the defence of doctrinal tenets. He is portrayed as a very zealous and vigilant advocate of orthodoxy and as one who handled any deviation with zeal<sup>10</sup> and vigor<sup>11</sup>. It is also made clear that he was willing to take the consequences of suffering in connection with such action<sup>12</sup>. Another piece of information gives us a similar estimate. In this, he is said to have been possessed with such devotion to orthodoxy that he was willing to endure any torment for its sake<sup>13</sup>. These qualities of Abraham surely did not endear him to the entire community. Nevertheless all the roots of the difficulties do not seem to lie in this sphere.

The same appraisal must be given to his rejection of entrenched convention, a matter which seems to have provoked the sentiments of many. He is reported to have possessed a 'statue'<sup>14</sup> and used it in his practise of worship<sup>15</sup>. Another innovation<sup>16</sup> also made him a target for attacks.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>10</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 627<sup>9-11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ 'he was battling valiantly', *ibid.*, p. 627<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ 'as he was willing to carry all the suffering for it', *ibid.*, p. 627<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ 'as to endure and bear all torments for it', *ibid.*, p. 630<sup>6-7</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ 'the saint had a statue (εἰκών) of our Lord and a sign of the cross', *ibid.*, p. 624<sup>10-11</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ 'as he was rising for the office, first he was serving 3 marmiātā before the image; and then he saluted also the cross', *ibid.*, p. 624<sup>11-12</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܝܝܢ 'as he was rising for the office, first he was serving 3 marmiātā before the image; and then he saluted also the cross', *ibid.*, p. 624<sup>11-12</sup>.



invitations to the Nestorian theologians to participate in discussion. This certainly included Abraham. While he himself was not able to attend in person, we are told that he prepared a document about the doctrinal position of the Nestorians<sup>20</sup> and that he also sent answers to certain questions<sup>21</sup>.

His active part in these affairs is shown in another way. Let us quote : 'After these (events) he sent Bishop Paulos and others with him and they went to the Caesar and they gave an account of the confession they held and the fathers whom they proclaimed' <sup>22</sup>. The reports that Abraham was a member of this delegation <sup>23</sup> are wrong.

We need not raise a cloud of suspicion over this matter. It is quite clear that Barḥadbešabbā here communicates something with an historical basis. There are several sources which corroborate the historicity of this incident. That Paulos took part in these discussions is recorded in a document of which an excerpt has survived<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore Paulos sent his own report about the deliberations to Qīswai, the physician at the court<sup>25</sup>. A letter of Baršaumā, bishop of Šuš, sent to Īšō'iahb II, refers to Paulos' trip to the emperor<sup>26</sup> and also that of Georgios, metropolitan of Moṣūl<sup>27</sup>. The Chronicle of Seert records the fact that Justinianus, after the peace with Khosrau asked that theologians be sent to him and that Khosrau sent Paulos the metropolitan of Nisibis together with the delegation that consisted of Mari, the bishop of Bālād, Barsaumā the bishop of Qardū, Išai, *mepašqānā* of Seleucia,

<sup>20</sup> ጥሑስና ቅዱስ 'doctrine of his confession', *Histoire*, II, p. 628<sub>13-14</sub>.

<sup>21</sup> ለእነዚህ ጥያቄዎች ላይ ጥቅም ላይ የዋለው 'he responded also to the questions which were asked of him', *ibid.*, p. 628<sub>14</sub>.

<sup>22</sup> כהן מלך יזו לעולם כהן חב כהן חב : כהן מלך  
למך מלך יזו לעולם כהן חב כהן חב . כהן מלך חב  
*ibid.*, p. 630<sub>3-4</sub>.

<sup>23</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 188.

<sup>24</sup> من اتيه واحد من هؤلاء الحكماء على ما كان عليه في ذلك الوقت  
من اتيه واحد من هؤلاء الحكماء على ما كان عليه في ذلك الوقت  
'from the disputation that Emperor Justinianus held with Bishop  
Paulos of Nisibis who was a Nestorian', Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14, 535, fol. 16b-18b.

<sup>25</sup> ABŪ'L-BARAKĀT, *Misbāh az-zilma*, p. 652.

<sup>26</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 568.

<sup>27</sup> See a treatise 'About the Faith of the Oriental Christians', in Ms. Vat. arab. 110, fol. 190a-192b.

Īšō'iahb of Arzūn and Bābai, bishop of Šīggar<sup>28</sup>. Let us also include here the datum that 'Abdīšō' registers a writing of Paulos concerning the controversy with the emperor<sup>29</sup>.

The conference in question seems to be the one which assembled in the city of Constantinople at the behest of the emperor Justinianus in the year 533 A.D. consisting of representatives of the Byzantine church and of the Monophysites<sup>30</sup>. We also have reports that certain Nestorian doctors were in Constantinople at approximately the same time. This we know for example of Mār Abā, Thomas of Edessa and Paulos the Persian<sup>31</sup>. But if these discussions did actually take place in that year, then Paulos could hardly have been the bishop of Nisibis. He was not consecrated to the office prior to the time that Mār Abā came back from Bēt Hūzāiē<sup>32</sup>, i.e. about 551 A.D. In this case, Paulos took part in the negotiations in the capacity of a teacher. On the other hand, this clarifies Barḥadbešabbā's text when he states that Abraham sent Paulos.

It is a pity that we do not learn more about this intermezzo. The more so since according to all indications it has caused an undulation having serious repercussions, involving not only the director of the school but also the school itself. Attempts were made to undermine the loyalty of the director to the Nestorian authorities<sup>33</sup> and to entice him with the hope of church unification<sup>34</sup>. Thus had Abraham been drawn into the web of these machinations and their complications. As we have come to expect,

<sup>28</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 187.

<sup>29</sup> *וּמִן הַסִּפּוּר הַזֶּה* 'and a disputation against the Caesar', *Catalogus librorum*, LXV, p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 187.

<sup>31</sup> The visit of Mār Abā has been placed between 525 and 533 by LABOURT, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 166.

<sup>32</sup> See Mār Abā's letter about the hierarchy, *Lettre V*, p. 93; cf. the vita of Mār Abā, *Taš'itā de-Mār Abā*, p. 269 ff.

<sup>33</sup> 'and perchance he has been tried to be bent regarding this : to leave his confession and to accept that of theirs', *Histoire*, II, p. 628<sub>3-4</sub>.

<sup>34</sup> *ܡܬܠܝܟܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܗܘܢ ܥܪܒܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܨܝܚܐ . ܡܠ ܕܝܝܬܐ ܕܡܨܝܚܐ  
ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܨܝܚܐ ܕܡܨܝܚܐ ܕܡܨܝܚܐ . ܡܠ 'chase Theodore and Nestorios  
from the church, and we shall agree with you, and all the church shall be one and  
(there shall be) one shepherd', *ibid.*, p. 629<sub>1,2</sub>.*



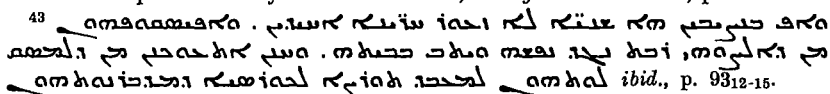
in 543-544<sup>41</sup>. When writing about the hierarchy, he speaks of the situation in Nisibis that had occasioned alarm in many circles. These brief remarks speak for themselves. 'And behold also in Nisibis quarrels have ruled since many years, and their bishop<sup>42</sup>, whom they have oppressed greatly, has withdrawn himself and has stayed in his residence — and we were hindered from going up to them in order to reform the seat of their diocese'<sup>43</sup>. What is additionally said in this document<sup>44</sup> about the situation points to a series of events created by the power politics of ecclesiastical officials.

## 7. SUSPENSION OF THE SCHOOL OF NISIBIS

It was necessary for us to take a closer look at the circumstances surrounding that stormy epoch since this has a definite bearing upon the fate of the School of Nisibis. We learn nothing of the final consequences of these difficulties in the life of the school from the works of Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān. The other Barḥadbešabbā to whom we owe our information is also silent on this point<sup>1</sup>. This again is a reminder of how inadequate our information really is. Fortunately new information emerges from an entirely unexpected quarter — from a text with which an anonymous writer has supplemented the work of Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwan in another recension<sup>2</sup>. In this we are told of events which not only describe the termination of the growth of the school but also

<sup>41</sup> This meeting took place in the month Šahrir in the 13th year of the rule of Khosrau, which was the fifth year of Mār Abā's office, *Synodicon orientale*, p. 68.

<sup>42</sup> It is regrettable that our text does not give us the name of this bishop. We do not know any of the bishops between Kusai, see 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 38, one of those who elected the opposition catholicos Narsai in 524, and Paulos, whose signature appears in the subscription to the synodical acts in 554, see *Synodicon orientale*, p. 108.

<sup>43</sup>  *ibid.*, p. 93<sup>12-15</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93 f.

<sup>1</sup> He tells about a very dangerous political accusation against Abraham that the *marzban* of Nisibis accepted and endorsed by forwarding it to the king, who also is reported to have wished to support the proposition. This incident is too embellished and claims that Abraham escaped acute danger through the intervention of a miracle, *Histoire*, II, p. 625 f. It is clear that the author hides something behind the veil of legends.

<sup>2</sup> *Integra narratio*, p. 32ff.











to him<sup>9</sup>, a work which in the West Syrian tradition has circulated anonymously<sup>10</sup>.

All that can be gathered from the scanty remarks and occasional references testifies to the fact that this teacher was able to give a new impetus to the interest in the cultivation of grammatical studies among the East Syrians.

#### b. Mār Abā

The most important teacher of the school during this period was Mār Abā. His case is interesting not only because he was a coryphaeus on the staff, but also because he was a product of the school the spirit of which formed and moulded him.

Born at Ḥālē<sup>11</sup> in Rādān<sup>12</sup>, on the right bank of the Tigris, he was nurtured under Mazdaism and was preparing himself for service in administration. He could hardly have imagined in whose service he was destined to live. That began to dawn on him when he met a Christian student Jāusep<sup>13</sup>. The impact was so deep that he was converted. Thus, an enemy of Christians and particularly of the *benai qeīāmē*<sup>14</sup> became a devout adherent of the Christian religion.

The same devotion was manifested in his studies at the School of Nisibis. Here he became attached quite closely to the teacher Ma'nā<sup>15</sup>. When Ma'nā became bishop of Arzūn, Abā accompanied him and was active as a teacher in the same town<sup>16</sup>. However the charm of the School of Nisibis drew him back. Whether he then

<sup>9</sup> Ms. Bagd. 522, fol. 64b - 79a; Ms. Berl. Sach. 226, fol. 46a — 55b; Ms. Vat. syr. 593, fol. 175a - 181b.

<sup>10</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14, 658, fol. 92a - 94a (7th cent.); Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14, 620, fol. 23a - 25b (9th cent.).

<sup>11</sup> *Taš'itā de-Mār Abā*, p. 211.

<sup>12</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 154.

<sup>13</sup> *Taš'itā de-Mār Abā*, p. 211 f.

<sup>14</sup> About these see VÖÖBUS, *Institution of the benai qeīāmā*, p. 19 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Whether he was the same Ma'nā who is reported to have composed *madrāšē*, *mēmre* and *'ūniātā* in the Persian language, and in the earlier part of his life was engaged in producing Graeco-Syro translation literature, see page 18 f., must remain open.

<sup>16</sup> ܐܒܐ ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܐܪܘܢܐ 'he was entrusted with the office of teaching in the country of Arzūn', *Taš'itā de-Mār Abā*, p. 217.



is told more clearly in that by Īšō' bar Nūn<sup>27</sup>. Abā succumbed and became a teacher in the School of Nisibis<sup>28</sup>. This step opened a long period<sup>29</sup> during which many of his scholarly works were born and brought to their fruition<sup>30</sup>.

Mār Abā's literary creation shows a range that makes him pre-eminent among all the contemporary teachers, scholars and authors.

In the field of biblical exegesis, his commentaries on Genesis, Psalms and the Proverbs were known to 'Abdīšō'<sup>31</sup> and those on Genesis, Psalms and the Wisdom of Solomon to the author of the Chronicle of Seert<sup>32</sup>. How much new information the latter source can offer us is not certain. Most probably it has nothing new to add<sup>33</sup>. In the New Testament those on Romans, First and Second Corinthians, on the 'three following'<sup>34</sup> and on Hebrews were known to 'Abdīšō' while our second witness speaks but vaguely<sup>35</sup>. All these works have disappeared, leaving only a few traces behind. All these are from the commentaries on the Old Testament, found

وقصدا نصيبين فلما حصل بها اجتمع اهل نصيبين الى مار ابا<sup>27</sup>  
وسالوه ان يتقلد التعليم والتفسير والخطب والترجمة لان كلامه كان  
مفهوماً معشوقاً . وختاروه على كلام مار ابراهيم الاول الذي كان قبله

'when he arrived at Nisibis, the inhabitants of this town went out to meet Mār Abā in order to ask him to be willing to take charge of instruction, interpretation and preaching because his words were clear and pleasant; they elected him at the request of Mār Abraham, the first who was before him', *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 156. The Arabic text in its concluding part is not quite clear. 'The first' obviously wants to distinguish this Abraham from another Abraham, namely Abraham bar Qardaḥē. The meaning of the last words is obscure. They may refer to the chair of interpretation. If so then they mean that Abraham held the chair of interpretation but when Mār Abā came, he transmitted these duties to him. Whether this is historically true, is another question.

<sup>28</sup> 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 40, wrongly places him in Seleucia.

<sup>29</sup> ܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ 'and they stayed in the office of instruction for a long time', *Taš'itā de-Mār Abā*, p. 223.

<sup>30</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 156.

<sup>31</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LVIII, p. 76.

<sup>32</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 158.

<sup>33</sup> One must take the fact into account that the Proverbs were known to the Syrians also under a different name, namely as the Wisdom of Solomon, Ms. Bagd. 112, fol. 240b, 241b; cf. Ms. Vat. syr. 578, fol. 80b, 96b.

<sup>34</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, p. 76.

<sup>35</sup> It speaks of the 'Pauline Letters', *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 150.

in the commentaries of ʾĪšōʿdād of Merv on the Pentateuch<sup>36</sup>, that on the Proverbs<sup>37</sup> and the Ecclesiasticus<sup>38</sup>.

Further splinters emerge in a repertory of East Syrian exegetical tradition<sup>39</sup>. These remnants are from the commentary on Genesis. Splinters also appear in another work of a hermeneutical character composed by Ishāq Šebadnāī<sup>40</sup>. But more information is given us in an anonymous commentary on the Old Testament which rests upon older sources<sup>41</sup>. Here references, numerically more copious, are made to a work on Proverbs<sup>42</sup>, and also on Ecclesiasticus<sup>43</sup>. The situation is the same in another manuscript of the same work<sup>44</sup> which gives the references to Proverbs<sup>45</sup> and the Ecclesiasticus<sup>46</sup> in almost the same form.

We are fortunate that another anonymous commentary, the *Gannat būssāmē*, comes to our aid<sup>47</sup>. Here are possible new splinters to supplement our scanty picture of the remnants. This work has preserved some shreds from the commentary on Isaiah<sup>48</sup>, and also from a commentary on Romans<sup>49</sup>, and on First Corinthians<sup>50</sup>. Indeed, this situation recalls the fact that these two commentaries were known to ʾAbdīšōʿ.

However, just as we are about to observe concord and coherence in the scanty information at our disposal, disquietude raises its head. It is to be observed that fragments and remains from com-

<sup>36</sup> *Commentaire*, II, p. 58.

<sup>37</sup> Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. syr. 10, fol. 215a, 216a *et passim*.

<sup>38</sup> Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. syr. 10, fol. 223a, 224b *et passim*.

<sup>39</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 7b, 46b, 56b.

<sup>40</sup> Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 11, fol. 6a, 7b, 8a, 9ab; Ms. Vat. syr. 592, fol. 49a, 50a (bis), 51a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9358, fol. 33b, 34a, 35a, 37ab; Ms. Ming. syr. 57, fol. 33b, 34a, 35ab, 37ab.

<sup>41</sup> Ms. Bagd. 112, fol. 1b ff.

<sup>42</sup> Ms. Bagd. 112, fol. 242b (bis), 243b, 244b, 248a, 252b, 253ab, 254a, 255b, 256b, 257a and 259b.

<sup>43</sup> Ms. Bagd. 112, fol. 270a (bis), 273b, 274a, 275ab.

<sup>44</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 578.

<sup>45</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 578, fol. 81b, 82a, 83b, 86b, 90b, 91a (bis), 92a, 93a, 94a, 96a.

<sup>46</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 578, fol. 105b, 108b, 110b.

<sup>47</sup> Ms. Bagd. B. Other codices of the same work are : Ms. Vat. syr. 494; Ms. Manch. Ryl. syr. 41.

<sup>48</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 41, fol. 6b, 9a; cf. also Ms. Bagd. 214, fol. 47b, 53a.

<sup>49</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 36, fol. 2a.

<sup>50</sup> Ms. Bagd. B. cah. 22, fol. 10b, 11b.

mentaries on the Gospel of Matthew <sup>51</sup>, Mark <sup>52</sup>, Luke <sup>53</sup> and John <sup>54</sup> are also preserved in the same work. Regarding their genesis we have no information. So we have no means available for evaluating the reliability of the data.

Other reasons compel disquietude and uneasiness. Indeed, the situation is such that that which this source gives us with one hand, it seems to take away with the other. In any case, it is certain that we have a picture which cannot be taken without reservation. A critical attitude is necessary. Our source speaks not only of Mār Abā but also of Abā Kaškrāiā. He introduces Abā Kaškrāiā and Mār Abā on the same page <sup>55</sup>. The same appears elsewhere. In the commentary on the Gospel of John the author first introduces Mār Abā Kaškrāiā, and only some lines later Mār Abā <sup>56</sup>. What does this phenomenon mean? The most radical explanation, of course, would be that the author has only one person in mind and this is Mār Abā of Kaškar, namely Mār Abā II <sup>57</sup>. This is actually what Chabot has suggested — the author refers to Patriarch Abā II <sup>58</sup>. Now, this suggestion carries with it a far-reaching implication. He wants us to think that everything that 'Abdišō' tells us about the exegetical works of Mār Abā, rests on sheer error. 'Abdišō' mistakenly credited the commentaries to Mār Abā but they belong actually to his later homonym <sup>59</sup>. It must be admitted that one observation seems to encourage this direction. The colophon at the end of the manuscript which enumerates the authors used in this work, notes : 'Mār Abā that is the Kaškrāiā' <sup>60</sup>. Yet we are not ready to cut the knot this

<sup>51</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 8, fol. 5b, 6b, 7a, cah. 10, fol. 5a (5 times), cah. 22, fol. 9b, 10b cah. 23, fol. 1b, 2b, cah. 24, fol. 5a, cah. 36, fol. 6a, 8a, cah. 42, fol. 4b, 6b, 9b.

<sup>52</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 11, fol. 6a.

<sup>53</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 9, fol. 8b, cah. 12, fol. 5a, 9a.

<sup>54</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 17, fol. 7a.

<sup>55</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 42, fol. 8b.

<sup>56</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 17, fol. 7a.

<sup>57</sup> He ruled from 740-41 till 750-51.

<sup>58</sup> 'Comme nous ne possédons aucun ms. de ces ouvrages, il est permis de se demander si les commentaires attribués par 'Ebedjésus à Mār Abā Ier ne doivent pas être restitués à son homonyme Mār Abā II', *Jardin des délices*, p. 494.

<sup>59</sup> 'Pour moi, je suis enclin à accepter la première hypothèse : les circonstances difficiles dans lesquelles vécut Mār Abā Ier permettent difficilement de croire qu'il ait pu composer la longue série des ouvrages qui lui sont attribués par 'Ebedjésus', *ibid.*, p. 494.

<sup>60</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 494, fol. 421b.

way. It contains too much guesswork to be accepted as a satisfactory solution. Would that we only knew more about the background of the colophon which has not been preserved in the older codex we have followed <sup>61</sup>. Moreover the way the author quotes Mār Abā Kaškrāiā seems to require a circumspect and more cautious attitude. There is much to indicate that the history of these traditions is more complicated, namely that two traditions have been fused, that of Mār Abā and that of Abā of Kaškar. Everything seems to point to a longer history of the conflation which must have taken place in the sources already before our author set his hand to the commentary. The same is suggested by the work of Ishāq Šebadnāiā <sup>62</sup>. Some symptoms seem to give us a hint about the possibility of such a conflation. It looks as if once there was an awareness of the distinction of these two witnesses in the exegetical tradition. It is quite possible that the epithet which appears, 'Rabbā' <sup>63</sup>, was originally introduced to maintain the distinction only to be blurred later. Similar attempts at employing such epithets make themselves noticeable <sup>64</sup>. We thus seem to have additional reminders that the solution should not be oversimplified.

Mār Abā's literary work introduced the genre of jurisprudence into the original Syriac literature. 'Abdišō' registers synodical decisions, administrative canons and ecclesiastical laws <sup>65</sup>. Of these materials, we possess a compendium of legislation concerning marriage. This piece which introduced jurisprudence into the original Syriac literature presents the biblical background for the injunctions and is orientated against the dangers stemming from Mazdaism, attacking the mythological basis of the concept of marriage <sup>66</sup>. A cycle of 40 canons on ecclesiastical affairs, involving the clergy as well as the laity, has found its place in the corpus of the

<sup>61</sup> In Ms. Bagd. B the end is lost with the last portion after cah. 46, fol. 7.

<sup>62</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 592, fol. 49a brings on the same folio page Mār Abā and Mār Abā Kaškraia; cf. Ms. Ming. syr. 571, fol. 37b.

<sup>63</sup> So in Ishāq Šebadnāiā, Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 11, fol. 9b; cf. Ms. Vat. syr. 592, fol. 43a, and Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9358, fol. 37b.

<sup>64</sup> In the tradition used by Ishāq Šebadnāiā the epithet *ze'ūrā* 'little' is added to Ephrēm to distinguish him as 'Ephrēm the Little, disciple of Cyril', from Ephrēm of Edessa, Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 15, fol. 9a; cf. Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9358, fol. 81b.

<sup>65</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, p. 81.

<sup>66</sup> *Syrische Rechtsbücher*, III, p. 255 ff.

synodical acts <sup>67</sup>. There exist also remains of an order of penitence <sup>68</sup>.

Writings in the area of practical religion include *mēmre* as well as *tūrgāmē* <sup>69</sup> in several volumes <sup>70</sup>, but no sample of them is left. Those designed for the cult are better off. Our sources <sup>71</sup> ascribe to him antiphonal canons <sup>72</sup> for the Psalter. These could secure their place in the liturgical tradition <sup>73</sup>. In the genre of the *tešbūhtā* and the *kārūzūtā*, at least one claims Mār Abā's authorship <sup>74</sup>.

A cycle of letters on various subjects <sup>75</sup> concludes the material in the original Syriac which has come down to us.

In addition to the literary creation in the original Syriac, Mār Abā contributed to literary culture by his translations. The tradition claims that Mār Abā translated the Old Testament from Greek into Syriac. 'Abdīšō' places this work at the head of the list of his writings <sup>76</sup>. Also the Chronicle of Seert speaks of this in clear terms <sup>77</sup>. However, regardless of these assurances the whole question is not so clear at all. The fact that our oldest source is silent about this accomplishment, although it comes very close to the matter <sup>78</sup>, is very disquieting. The possibility that the idea of his translation

<sup>67</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 545 ff. The lacuna among the 40 canons can be filled out by the Arabic version of the missing canons, IBN AṬ-ṬAIYIB, *Fiqh an-naṣrānīya*, I, p. 100 ff. See also VÖÖBUS, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen*, II.

<sup>68</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 128, fol. 63ab.

<sup>69</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, p. 76.

<sup>70</sup> وعمل كتاب التواجيم سريانيًا [وايضًا] كتاب التعزية وميامر كثيرة

'and he composed a book of the *tūrgāmē* in Syriac, and a book of admonition, and many *mēmre*', AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 41.

<sup>71</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, p. 76; *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 158.

<sup>72</sup> Prayers inserted into the Psalter after the first two verses of each Psalm.

<sup>73</sup> Information about this has been preserved in the manuscript tradition itself, for example Ms. Berl. orient. quart. 803, fol. 105b; Ms. Ming. syr. 507, fol. 59b.

<sup>74</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 17,219, fol. 165b-166a and Ms. Bagd. 3124, fol. 62a-63b respectively.

<sup>75</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 69 ff. Cf. also Ms. Vat. syr. 599, fol. 11a-19b; Ms. Ming. syr. 47, fol. 73b-78b; Ms. Ming. syr. 586, fol. 304a-311a; Ms. Berl. orient. oct. 1257, fol. 237b-245a.

<sup>76</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, p. 75.

<sup>77</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 158.

<sup>78</sup> ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ 'and in Alexandria he interpreted the divine books in Greek', *Taš'itā de-Mār Abā*, p. 218.

arose by mistake<sup>79</sup> still haunts us in the quest. If, indeed, the tradition is correct in its claim, vestiges of it may be seen in the remnants of a Syro-Lucianic text<sup>80</sup> and in the patristic sources where they have found a place of refuge<sup>81</sup>. Regarding Mār Abā's translation of the liturgies there is no doubt. The liturgy of Theodore of Mopsuestia<sup>82</sup> and that of Nestorios<sup>83</sup> have preserved this tradition<sup>84</sup> in the prescript, i.e. that Mār Abā was the translator using the help of Thomas<sup>85</sup>. It seems that he also prepared some other translations of the works of Nestorios<sup>86</sup>. However, the claim that he translated all the works of Nestorius<sup>87</sup> is an exaggeration.

The unexpected death of Catholicos Paulos two months after his entry into that office<sup>88</sup> took Mār Abā from the school against his will. His unanimous election in the year 540<sup>89</sup> forced upon him the decision and he was inducted by the bishops as the leader of the church. It put him in a very difficult situation, one that was the result of the 15 year-long schism between the rival catholicoi Narsai

<sup>79</sup> Namely that somehow the translation work of Thomas of Hargel, see VÖÖBUS, *New Data for the Solution of the Problem*, p. 169 ff., and *Early Versions*, p. 103 ff., was confused with the translation work of Mār Abā and his teacher Thomas.

<sup>80</sup> *Esaiae fragmenta syriaca*, p. 1 ff. However, this text rests on the version of Lucian. But according to our information Mār Abā is supposed to have produced the version in Alexandria. Thus according to all indications in all probability this text has a better claim to be of Polycarp, cf. VÖÖBUS, *Syrische Bibelübersetzungen*, col. 389.

<sup>81</sup> DIETRICH, *Išōdādāh's Stellung*, p. LIV f.; BAUMSTARK, *Griechische und hebräische Bibelzitate*, p. 1 ff.; VOSTÉ, *Citations syrohexaplaïres*, p. 19 ff.

<sup>82</sup> Ms. Bagd. 36, fol. 24b-40b; Ms. Berl. orient. quart. 546, fol. 45a-56a; Ms. Cambr. Add. 1984, fol. 48a-56b; Ms. Ming. syr. 53, fol. 43a-58b; Ms. Par. syr. 310, fol. 50b-61a.

<sup>83</sup> This was the old liturgy of Constantinople.

<sup>84</sup> Ms. Bagd. 36, fol. 42a-63b; Ms. Berl. orient. quart. 546, fol. 56a-73a; Ms. Cambr. Add. 1984, fol. 57a-70b; Ms. Ming. syr. 53, fol. 59a-85a; Ms. Par. syr. 310, fol. 61a-102a.

<sup>85</sup> This tradition goes back to a *mēmra* composed by Catholicos Iwannīs on the fathers as it appears in the prescript of the text of the liturgy of Nestorios.

<sup>86</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum* XX, p. 36 reports that the Book of Tragedy, the Book of Heraclides and the letter to Qūzmā were translated at the time of Paulos. If this refers to Catholicos Paulos, as it seems, we could see here a hint to the work of Mār Abā.

<sup>87</sup> Ms. Berl. orient. quart. 546, fol. 56a; Ms. Cambr. Add. 1984, fol. 57a.

<sup>88</sup> He ruled in 847 A. Gr. = 536, ELIĀ BAR ŠINĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, I, p. 50 f.

<sup>89</sup> As the synchronism, the 13th year of Khosrau = the 5th year of Mār Abā's rule, demands, see *Synodicon orientale*, p. 68, cf. p. 74. The date 536-7 in *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 157, is wrong.

and Eliša<sup>90</sup> which had devastating consequences<sup>91</sup> and had cut deeply into the body of the church<sup>92</sup>. Mār Abā manifested his energy also in his new position as head of the church. He courageously tackled the problems and healed the rift. His tireless visitations led him even to ‘Elam, Bēt Hūzāiē and Persis<sup>93</sup>. Order and discipline among the clergy<sup>94</sup> and laity were established. Despite his responsibilities, he still could not abandon the work so close to his heart — instruction. This can be seen in the report about his daily agenda: ‘During the nights he was busy with the writings which he sent to the provinces concerning the ecclesiastical administration; but during the day until the fourth hour with the interpretation of the divine book; and from the fourth hour until evening with carrying out judgements and resolving quarrels’<sup>95</sup>.

The tradition claims that Mār Abā founded the School of Seleucia<sup>96</sup>, which later grew in strength and size<sup>97</sup>. The value of the tradition regarding the founding of the school is not great<sup>98</sup>. It appears only in a late source, and seems to have grown without control. Fatal to it becomes the testimony given by a man who

<sup>90</sup> MEŠĪHĀZEKĀ, *Histoire* XX, p. 74.

<sup>91</sup> It lasted for 15 years according to Mār Abā, see the following footnote, for 12 years according to ELIĀ BAR ŠĪNĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, I, p. 50.

<sup>92</sup> In every bishopric there were rival bishops, the order and discipline were ruined, the canons ignored, ABĀ, *Définitions et règles*, p. 92.

<sup>93</sup> ABĀ, *Pragmatique des réformes*, p. 70 f.

<sup>94</sup> He is reported to have introduced celibacy again for the catholicoi, demanding that they must remain as Šem'ōn bar Sabā'ē was, *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 159. According to 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 41, this injunction was extended also to the bishops.

[illegible]

<sup>96</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 157 f. This tradition has been found reliable, cf. DUVAL, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 218; CHABOT, *Synodicon orientale*, p. 318, footnote 1; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 119.

<sup>97</sup> See the appendix.

<sup>98</sup> The biography of Mār Abā, enumerating his accomplishments, is silent about his rôle in founding the theological school in Seleucia. It says only that when he went to Seleucia as catholicos he continued his instruction there, *Taš'ūtā de-Mār Abā*, p. 226.

was related to the School of Seleucia. This is Iṣai who was a teacher there<sup>99</sup>.

An echo of the positive effects of Mār Abā's able leadership can be seen in the explosion of the wrath of the Magi. In 541 he became a victim of this anger. He was sent to exile in Adorbaigān which lasted for 7 years<sup>100</sup>. Even from a long distance, he managed to keep the reins of the leadership in his hands<sup>101</sup>. In 548/9 he escaped and returned to the capital but was put in prison for 3 years<sup>102</sup>. Although released in 551 his sufferings had so shortened his life that he died in the following year.

### c. Paulos

Our main source about Paulos is Mešīḥāzekā. This witness who has written his account during Abraham's directorship tells us that Paulos was a *maqreīnā* under Abraham<sup>103</sup>.

Further we are told that when Ḥenānā assumed the bishopric of Ḥadiab, the need for a school in the diocese arose. Abraham gave him Paulos in order to establish this school in Ḥadiab<sup>104</sup>. His work kept him there for 30 years in the directorship of the school until Catholicos Abā's eye fell upon him as a candidate for the vacancy of the bishop's seat in Nisibis. For this seat he was appointed and consecrated: 'And this (happened) after he returned from Bēt Hūzāiē'<sup>105</sup>. This may refer to Abā's return in 540 or in 551. In any case, he subscribed to the synodical decisions under Catholicos Jāusep in 554<sup>106</sup>. He was in his office until 571<sup>107</sup>.

A question concerning the identity of this Paulos involves some complications. He has been identified with Paul 'the Persian' to

<sup>99</sup> The Chronicle of Seert also claims that Mār Abā after founding the school appointed Iṣai interpreter, *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 158. However, Iṣai himself says something quite different. He tells that Mār Abraham taught before him in the school, *Traité sur les martyrs*, p. 17.

<sup>100</sup> In a village of Srš, *Taš'itā de-Mār Abā*, p. 239 f.

<sup>101</sup> He arranged here a conclave of bishops that took place during the end of 543 or the beginning of 544, *ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>102</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 545 ff.

<sup>103</sup> *Histoire*, XX, p. 75<sub>48-49</sub>.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75<sub>49</sub>.

<sup>105</sup> ܠܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ *ibid.*, p. 75<sub>56-57</sub>.

<sup>106</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 108.

<sup>107</sup> See page 148.

whose scholarship Junilius paid tribute<sup>108</sup>. Kihn<sup>109</sup>, Mercati<sup>110</sup>, Labourt<sup>111</sup> and Ortiz de Urbina<sup>112</sup> have regarded this as convincing. However, serious difficulties stand in the way of this assumption. Chronological<sup>113</sup> and other difficulties<sup>114</sup>, including the fact that he composed his works in the Greek idiom, do not allow us to do this. His works which we possess are in the service of theological controversy directed against the Manichæan doctrines<sup>115</sup> and of biblical isagogic. We shall take a closer look at his biblical work through which this man speaks so distinctly and vigorously that we can apprehend his spirit.

Entirely impossible is the attempt to identify Paulos with another Paulos, as Nestle<sup>116</sup>, Labourt<sup>117</sup> and Chabot<sup>118</sup>, have advocated. That Paulos composed his works in the Persian language<sup>119</sup> and finally embraced, after disappointing experiences, Mazdaism<sup>120</sup>.

Contrary to these men, Paulos, the former *maqreîānā* in the

<sup>108</sup> See page 179, 193.

<sup>109</sup> *Theodor von Mopsuestia*, p. 258 f.

<sup>110</sup> *Vita e gli scritti di Paolo*, p. 3, 15.

<sup>111</sup> *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 166.

<sup>112</sup> *Patrologia syriaca*, p. 118.

<sup>113</sup> According to the tradition which has kept the memory of such a theological colloquy, it took place after the establishment of the peace between Justinianus and Khosrau, *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 187. The peace treaty was made for 50 years in 562. However the disputation between Paulos 'the Persian' and the Manichee Photeinos took place in 527. We are informed that the Prefect Theodore Teganistes presided over the disputation.

<sup>114</sup> He is not called a bishop by Junilius.

<sup>115</sup> A report about the disputation with a Manichee Photeinos, which involves the doctrine of two principles, the origin of the human soul and the validity of the Old Testament, reveals a thorough knowledge of the dialectics of Aristotle, *Disputatio*, p. 80 ff. Another work is an apology written against a thesis of a Manichee — possibly of the same Photeinos — which had been smuggled into the royal library after the decree of Justinianus, *Apologia*, *ibid.*, p. 91 ff. See also *Analecta sacra*, I, p. 70 f.

<sup>116</sup> *TLZ* I (1876), col. 668 f.; also JORDAN, *Geschichte altchr. Literatur*, p. 426.

<sup>117</sup> *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 166 f.

<sup>118</sup> *Littérature syriaque*, p. 52.

<sup>119</sup> Ms. Alqōš 53, cah. 24, fol. 1-15, contains his commentary on Aristotle, *περὶ ἐρμηνείας*, which according to the prescript was translated from Persian into Syriac by Severos Sēbōkt. His introduction to logic, in Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,660, fol. 55b-67b, may also be a translation from its original in Persian. It was dedicated to Khosrau I.

<sup>120</sup> After his aspirations to become metropolitan of Persis collapsed, BAR 'EBRĀĪĀ, *Chronicon eccl.*, III, col. 97.

School of Nisibis, and teacher in Ḥadiab, who was elevated to the metropolitan's seat of Nisibis composed his works in Syriac. There can be no doubt that 'Abdišō' has him in mind when he included Paulos of Nisibis in the nomenclature of the Syrian authors. The sequence he maintains is as follows : disciples of Mār Abā, Thomas of Edessa, Sargīs of Rēš'ainā, Paulos of Nisibis and Bābai <sup>121</sup>.

At the head of his writings is a work the title of which can be translated as 'the Tradition of the Scripture' or 'Commentary of the Scripture' <sup>122</sup>, obviously a biblical-theological or exegetical work. It is lost without trace.

The biblical work is followed by 'a Disputation against the Caesar' <sup>123</sup>. This is a writing about which we learn more in Abū 'l-Barakāt who included in his work a paragraph about Paulos of Bāṣrā, Metropolitan of Nisibis: 'From him there is a letter in which he included what he met in the disputation with the King Justinianus, the king of the Romans, about the foundations of the faith; as he was about to travel to him, he wrote to Qīswai, the physician of the king' <sup>124</sup>. This writing is not entirely lost. One excerpt has survived bearing the title : 'From the Dispute King Justinianus held with Paulē, bishop of Nisibis, who was a Nestorian' <sup>125</sup>.

Finally 'Abdišō' adds letters on various subjects which he does not specify <sup>126</sup>.

As this discussion shows we are confronted by two men with the same name who served the School of Nisibis as teachers. The two must be distinguished clearly. The one was a *magreiūnā* for a short time. His services to the school were of a different kind after his return to Nisibis as its bishop and metropolitan. The other has played a far more important rôle as a teacher, making great contributions to the cultivation of biblical studies.

<sup>121</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LXV, p. 87 f.

<sup>122</sup> ܬܪܕܝܬܐ ܕܬܝܠܬܐ ܝܠܕܐ ܝܠܕܐ *ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>123</sup> ܬܪܕܝܬܐ ܕܬܝܠܬܐ ܝܠܕܐ ܝܠܕܐ *ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>124</sup> له رسالة ضمنها ما اتفق له من الجدل في اصول الدين مع الملك اسطيانوس ملك الروم لما اشخص اليه كتبها الى قسوى طيب الملك

*Miṣbāḥ az-ẓilma*, p. 652.

<sup>125</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,535, fol. 16b-18b, found in a Monophysite compilation.

<sup>126</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, p. 88.

## d. Thomas of Edessa

Thomas was one of the more eminent disciples of Mār Abā<sup>127</sup>. Moreover, he was enabled to step into the footsteps of his master and thus continue his instruction at the School of Nisibis. For this we have — fortunately — his own testimony in the autobiographical data he has inserted in one of his works which has escaped destruction. According to his own words, he had the privilege to grow up under the hand of Mār Abā, and later was elevated as his successor to the chair which Mār Abā held at the School of Nisibis<sup>128</sup>.

In the case of Thomas of Edessa, confusion must be avoided with another Thomas of Edessa who was the teacher of Mār Abā in Greek. Such an identification is impossible since, according to the testimony of Cosmas Indiopleustes, the latter died in Constantinople<sup>129</sup>. Nor can our Thomas be confused with Thomas of Ḥargel<sup>130</sup>. He also did not live in Edessa<sup>131</sup>, and of course, could not be a teacher there, but belonged to the School of Nisibis.

Of his literary work only very little has survived and our knowledge of the extent of his creation is not much better. Of his exegetical works nothing is known except for a vestige in the repertoire of the East Syrian exegesis<sup>132</sup>. His treatise about the origin of the festivals of Christmas and Epiphany is the only one that is extant<sup>133</sup>. His disputations with the heterodox movements<sup>134</sup>, a work against astrology<sup>135</sup> and a letter about (ecclesiastical) music<sup>136</sup> exist only in titles. The same is true for his writings

<sup>127</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 170.

<sup>128</sup> *De nativitate*, p. 5.

<sup>129</sup> νῦν δὲ ἐν τῇ Βυζαντίῳ βουλήσει θεοῦ τὸν βίον μεταλλάξαντι, *Topographia christiana*, col. 73.

<sup>130</sup> BAR 'ĒBRĀIĀ, *Chronicon eccl.*, II, col. 89 f.

<sup>131</sup> So Carr, in the introduction to the *De nativitate*, p. 11.

<sup>132</sup> Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 11, fol. 10a; Ms. Ming. syr. 57, fol. 42a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9358, fol. 42a.

<sup>133</sup> *De nativitate*, p. 3 ff.

<sup>134</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ, *Catalogus librorum*, LXIII, p. 87.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>136</sup> ܬܠܐ ܕܗܠܐ ܕܚܝܐܝܬܐ *ibid.*, p. 87.



About Qiiōrē's activity, our information is very poor. It is not much better in regard to his later life and work. However, we do know that he followed Mār Abā to Seleucia<sup>147</sup>. It seems that he taught there for a while. Finally he found his place of teaching in Ḥīrtā<sup>148</sup>. He is reported to have founded his own school in this place<sup>149</sup>. He appears in the tradition as a doctor in Ḥīrtā<sup>150</sup>.

#### f. Iṣai

Iṣai appears as a 'presbyter and *malpānā*'<sup>151</sup>. The information about Iṣai as a teacher in the School of Nisibis comes up quite accidentally. In connection with the catastrophe that struck the school<sup>152</sup> forcing it to close and thus moving the students in part to Seleucia, it is mentioned that when the opportunity presented itself to reopen the doors to the returning teachers and students, Iṣai decided to stay there<sup>153</sup>. In fact, in other sources, the Chronicle of Seert<sup>154</sup> and Mari<sup>155</sup>, he appears as the interpreter of the School of Seleucia.

Information about his literary work is very scanty. A commentary on martyrs<sup>156</sup> is the only one we have.

Once again he emerges in the report about the delegation of the prelates sent to negotiate with Emperor Justinianus<sup>157</sup>. Another symptom of the importance of his personality appears in the fact that he was a candidate for the catholicate<sup>158</sup>.

<sup>146</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, p. 170.

<sup>147</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 195, fol. 92a.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>149</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 171.

<sup>150</sup> 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 40.

<sup>151</sup> Ms. Ming. syr, 195, fol. 137b.

<sup>152</sup> See page 155 ff.

<sup>153</sup> *Integra narratio*, p. 38.

<sup>154</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 158.

<sup>155</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 50.

<sup>156</sup> *Traité sur les martyrs*, p. 15 ff.

<sup>157</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 187.

<sup>158</sup> After the dismissal of Catholicos Jäusep he was elected but had to retreat before the pressure put on him by the machinations and power politics, *ibid.*, p. 192.

## g. Rāmīšō'

Whether Rāmīšō' was a disciple of Mār Abā<sup>159</sup> must remain an open question. Certain it is that his period of instruction was terminated by the catastrophe that befell the School of Nisibis<sup>160</sup>. He was another teacher like Iṣai who did not return but stayed in Seleucia<sup>161</sup>.

About Rāmīšō', the tradition is virtually silent. Nothing is reported about his literary life in these sources. A work on punctuation bearing Rāmīšō''s name and known to authors interested in grammatical studies, like ʾIšō'iahb bar Malkōn<sup>162</sup> and Bar 'Ebrāiā<sup>163</sup>, may belong to the same Rāmīšō'. This possibility is open<sup>164</sup>. Some have found this claim to be sufficiently trustworthy<sup>165</sup>.

About his life during the period starting with his activities in Seleucia we must be content with a few casual remarks. Rāmīšō' is reported to have become the successor of Iṣai in the chair of interpretation<sup>166</sup>. Later he was elevated to the bishopric of Anbār<sup>167</sup>.

## h. Narsai

The only source of information about this teacher appears in the document that emanated from the School of Nisibis itself. This is the affirmation<sup>168</sup> of the leadership of the school in regard to the statutes<sup>169</sup>. In this connection together with Abraham, the director of the school, Mār Narsai appears as a kind of assistant or as a representative of the teaching staff or the community. Here he is introduced as 'a deacon and *maqreīānā*'<sup>170</sup>.

<sup>159</sup> SCHER, *Écrivains syriens*, p. 10.

<sup>160</sup> See page 155 ff.

<sup>161</sup> *Integra narratio*, p. 38.

<sup>162</sup> ʾIšō'iahb bar Malkōn in his work on punctuation says that Jāusep of Ahwaz, Ḥenānīšō', Rāmīšō' and others have written on punctuation, Ms. Kerk. 45, cah. 22, fol. 8a; Ms. Vat. syr. 616, fol. 20a; also Jōḥannān bar Zōb'i in his tract justifying his book on grammar, *ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Kelābā de-ḡemhē*, IV, 4, p. 254.

<sup>164</sup> See page 200 ff.

<sup>165</sup> MERX, *Historia grammaticae*, p. 30; DUVAL, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 70.

<sup>166</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 156; MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 50.

<sup>167</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 171.

<sup>168</sup> See page 147 f.

<sup>169</sup> *Statutes*, p. 88.

<sup>170</sup> ܩܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܪܝܬܐ *ibid.*,

## i. Others

Our information regarding the teachers is fragmentary and does not allow us to reconstruct a more satisfactory picture of the teaching staff. There occur references to other teachers but whether they were related to the School of Nisibis cannot be established <sup>171</sup>.

9. GLIMPSES INTO THE INSTRUCTION  
UNDER ABRAHAM

For this period in the history of the school new sources come to our aid enabling us to learn more about the kind of instruction given in the school. That which comes within the field of our vision speaks of a development and enrichment. This certainly evokes closer inquiry.

First of all, the interest shown in the subject that dealt with the 'eltā 'cause' for the festivals is noteworthy. Thomas composed such writings <sup>1</sup>. Qīiōrē followed him with more numerous contributions <sup>2</sup>. An unknown author who also was a teacher in the School of Nisibis composed another piece <sup>3</sup>. Iṣai composed similar writings on the martyrs <sup>4</sup>. Thus the chorus of all the voices engaged in instruction in the School of Nisibis, is more that noteworthy. In these writings, we see something of what was produced in class work and designed to further instruction in this subject.

Something could be said about the stronger interest in polemics in the curriculum. The practical situation which Nestorian Christianity faced, made it unavoidable. What we see in the titles of works produced by Jōhannān of Bēt Rabban <sup>5</sup> seems to be a record

<sup>171</sup> One is Pōsī, a teacher, whose treatise on the feast-days has been included in the cycle of similar works produced by the teachers of the School of Nisibis, Ms. Ming. syr. 195, fol. 64b - 72b; Ms. Alqōš 155, a copy of Ms. Seert 82; DIETRICH, *Bericht über neuentdeckte Urkunden*, p. 198. As his introductory words to his treatise indicate, he seems to have composed a number of similar treatises. Whether or not this doctor belonged to the teaching staff of the School of Nisibis, must remain an open question.

<sup>1</sup> See page 173 f.

<sup>2</sup> See page 174 f.

<sup>3</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 195, fol. 25a-44b.

<sup>4</sup> Composed at the request of Mār Qīris, a presbyter, and Jōhannān the *rabbaitā* and *malpānā* of the school, *Traité sur les martyrs*, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> See page 215 f.

of such presentations the purpose of which was to give orientation in regard to the relationships with the Jews, the Magi and the adherents of the Monophysite creed.

It seems that also the historical segment in the curriculum was strengthened by a new discipline whose appearance must have made a considerable impact and endeared itself in the circles of literary culture. Among the works of Abraham, there is one on the founding of the schools<sup>6</sup>. It seems to have grown out of the lectures on this subject. This assumption becomes particularly tempting when one takes into account the practical purpose of expanding the network of the schools which the school tried to instil into its pupils<sup>7</sup>. This assumption would also explain why this subject received such sympathetic and tender cultivation and wide interest.

How the duties of the teachers were assigned must remain open. Occasional references are not sufficient for us to draw any conclusions<sup>8</sup>.

While our vision in these areas is hindered and the picture before us is dim and blurred, we do see one area more clearly. It so happens that this is the main area of instruction, namely biblical studies. That which we are able to see indicates that the teaching had undergone a substantial transformation. During the time of Narsai we see how his poetic gifts dominated his creative work. We hardly err in assuming that through his *mēmre* we also get a taste of his instruction, if not in its entirety then certainly of its best and most elaborate part. As this has already been discussed the tradition that he produced exegetical works has no supporting credentials at all.

In the time of Abraham, however, we see something quite different. The existence of his exegetical works, which apparently grew out of his instruction, is well certified<sup>9</sup>. His less poetically fascinated mind put the emphasis on instruction where it belonged.

<sup>6</sup> See page 142f.

<sup>7</sup> See page 204 f.

<sup>8</sup> 'Ob die klerikalen Standesbestimmungen besondere Lehrämter einschlossen, so dass z.B. die Aufgaben des « Presbyters und Leselehrers », andere waren als die des « Diakons und Leselehrers », oder ob die Obliegenheiten der Lehrer von ihrem jeweiligen Ordo unabhängig waren, ist nicht zu entscheiden », NELZ, *Theologische Schulen*, p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> See page 139 ff.

This was the reason he became an expert in the hermeneutic tradition.

This process of transformation can be traced in another way. The reorientation makes itself manifest in efforts arising from necessities felt in the new atmosphere. One reflection appears in the endeavors to utilize the rich exegetical heritage of Theodore of Mopsuestia, which had been translated into Syriac, for class-work. Abraham is credited with the merit of having been the man who, through his work of revision and redaction, made these writings effective sources for the students and an integral part of the work in the classroom<sup>10</sup>. This fact is of such a kind that it makes every comment superfluous.

Thus in both directions of Abraham's activities in the service of fostering instruction in the biblical field we can see the important landmarks on the road towards advancement.

We are extraordinarily fortunate in being able to deepen the insight we have gained. There is an astounding piece of evidence, a very ancient exponent of the instruction waiting for us. To be sure, it does not come to us directly in its original Syriac form but indirectly through the mediation of a Greek *Vorlage* which is lost. This by no means diminishes its value. This source has been preserved for us in the *De partibus divinae legis*, composed by a Syrian, Paulos, an alumnus of the School of Nisibis<sup>11</sup>. Junilius, the *Qaestor Sacri Palatii*<sup>12</sup>, in Constantinople had obtained from him this text-book on hermeneutics which he was accustomed to give in the form of lectures to his students as an introduction to the biblical studies. This must have happened soon after he met Primasius, bishop of Hadrumentum in 551 in Constantinople. The latter had become interested in this work<sup>13</sup>. Paulos must have written his work in the Greek language<sup>14</sup> and it became the basis for the Latin translation<sup>15</sup>.

With this source designed as a manual to stimulate solid biblical

<sup>10</sup> See page 137 f.

<sup>11</sup> About his person see page 170 f.

<sup>12</sup> PROCOPIOS, *Anecdota* XX, 17, p. 127.

<sup>13</sup> At his request Junilius undertook the work of translation.

<sup>14</sup> For this possibility there seem to be some traces, for instance : in *Graeco enim typus specialiter legitur, De partibus*, II, 17, col. 34.

<sup>15</sup> The form of question and answer was given by Junilius himself.

studies, we are brought within the classroom situation. In fact a window providing insights into the instruction and the methods employed is given us. We can hardly appreciate this deeply enough. Indeed, Junilius puts us in his debt.

The first part of his work unfolds for us the biblical isagogic. This is extraordinarily revealing. The complex of questions is handled via an analysis which explores five avenues.

The first deals with the genre of literature and occupies the major part in this analysis. Every genre in the classification receives treatment under the same procedure. It begins with the extent of the material, registers the occurrence of this kind in other genres of biblical literature, and concludes with an evaluation of this material in relation to other genres as seen from the angle of hermeneutic practice<sup>16</sup>. In this way, the material of biblical literature is sifted, divided into historical<sup>17</sup>, prophetic<sup>18</sup>, proverbial<sup>19</sup> of various types<sup>20</sup> and didactic<sup>21</sup> genres.

The next phase handles the issue of authority<sup>22</sup>. Here the principle of threefold authority is set up : perfect authority<sup>23</sup>, disputable authority<sup>24</sup> and no authority<sup>25</sup>. This scale corresponds to wellknown categories in ecclesiastical terminology<sup>26</sup>. Again the whole material in biblical literature is classified according to this scale, and the books are enumerated which have full authority in

<sup>16</sup> For instance : D. Quid illi commune cum caeteris ? M. Habet commune cum simplici doctrina, quod utraque superficie planae videntur, cum sint intellectu plerumque difficiles : nam aliae contra, *De partibus*, I, 3, col. 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 3, col. 16 f.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 4, col. 17 f.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 5, col. 18 f.

<sup>20</sup> D. Quot modis in divina lege allegoria cognoscitur ? M. Quatuor : aut secundum translationem vel metaphoram... aut secundum imaginationem vel hypotyposin... aut secundum comparisonem vel similitudinem... aut secundum proverbialem modum, *ibid.*, col. 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 6, col. 19.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 7, col. 20.

<sup>23</sup> Perfectae auctoritatis, *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Mediae auctoritatis, *ibid.*,

<sup>25</sup> Nullius auctoritatis, *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> ὁμολογούμενα, ἀντιλεγόμενα, νόθα.

the Old Testament<sup>27</sup> and the New Testament<sup>28</sup>; then those having the debatable authority in the Old Testament<sup>29</sup> and New Testament<sup>30</sup>. The rest is of no value<sup>31</sup>. The manner in which this is carried out demonstrates the critical spirit and historical sense of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

It is interesting to observe with regard to the extent of the canon that the Peshitta<sup>32</sup> was not considered an absolute norm on this subject in the School of Nisibis. For the canon includes the Epistle of James. This letter, however, appears under the secondary books in the compendium of Paulos. In this we clearly see the influence of Theodore who rejected it<sup>33</sup>. On the other hand, the tradition of the School of Nisibis at that time had made some concessions — departing from the position of Theodore. Thus two catholic epistles

<sup>27</sup> De historia. Gen. 1, Levit. 1, Num. 1, Deut. 1, Jesu Nave 1, Judicum 1, Ruth 1, Regum secundum nos 4, secundum Hebraeos 2, *ibid.*, I, 3, col. 16.

De prophetia : Psalmorum CL lib. 1, Osee lib. 1, Isaiae lib. 1, Joel lib. 1, Amos lib. 1, Abdiae lib. 1, Jonae lib. 1, Michaeae lib. 1, Nahum lib. 1, Sophoniae lib. 1, Habacuc lib. 1, Jeremiae lib. 1, Ezechiel lib. 1, Daniel lib. 1, Aggaei lib. 1, Zachariae lib. 1, Malachiae lib. 1, *ibid.*, I, 4, col. 18.

De proverbiiis : Salomonis Proverbiorum lib. 1, et Jesu filii Sirach lib. 1, *ibid.*, I, 5, col. 18.

De simplici doctrina : Eccles. lib. 1, *ibid.*, I, 6, col. 19.

<sup>28</sup> De historia : Evangeliorum 4..., Actuum apostolorum, *ibid.*, I, 3, col. 16. De simplici doctrina : et epistolae Pauli Apostoli (14), beati Petri ad gentes 1, et beati Joannis prima.

<sup>29</sup> De historia : adjungunt plures : Paralipomenon 2, Job 1, Esdrae 2, Judith 1, Esther 1, Macab. 2, *ibid.*, I, 3, col. 17. One manuscript includes also : Tobiae, see Instituta edited by ΚΙΗΝ, *Theodor von Mopsuestia*, p. 472. This inclusion is correct since the author himself uses this book, see *ibid.*, II, 3.15, col. 28 f.

De proverbiiis : adjungunt quidem librum qui vocatur Sapientiae et Cantica canticorum, *ibid.*, I, 5, col. 18.

<sup>30</sup> De prophetia : caeterum de Joannis Apocalypsi apud Orientales admodum dubitatur, *ibid.*, I, 4, col. 18.

De simplici doctrina : adjungunt quamplurimi quinque alias quae Apostolorum Canonicae nuncupantur : id est, Jacobi 1, Petri secundum, Judae unam, Joannis duas, *ibid.*, I, 6, col. 19.

<sup>31</sup> D. Qui nullius auctoritatis sunt ? M. Reliqui omnes, *ibid.*, I, 7, col. 20.

<sup>32</sup> VÖÖBUS, *History of the Gospel Text*, p. 46 ff., cf. p. 50.

<sup>33</sup> Καὶ διαγραφόμενος τὴν εἰς αὐτὸν τοῦ Πνεύματος συγγραφὴν, ἣν ὁ μέγας Ἰάκωβος ἐν τῇ κατ' αὐτὸν καθολικῇ Ἐπιστολῇ βεβαιῶν ἔλεγεν, LEONTIOS, *Contra Nestorianos*, col. 1366.

were included in the canon<sup>34</sup>. Theodore had rejected them all<sup>35</sup>. At this stage, we observe the last sign of resistance against the fuller canon as presented by the Peshitta<sup>36</sup>.

The third aspect concerns the questions of authorship<sup>37</sup>. The examination deals with three possibilities for ascertaining authorship: prescripts and introductions<sup>38</sup>, exclusively prescripts<sup>39</sup>, and historical tradition<sup>40</sup>. In addition an estimate is given of those books whose authorship remains unknown<sup>41</sup>.

The fourth aspect deals with the quality of biblical literature, and the phenomena of poetic and prose texts<sup>42</sup>.

The fifth aspect is devoted to the arrangement in the biblical literature, namely the separation into the Old and New Testament<sup>43</sup> and justification for the same<sup>44</sup>.

What catches our eye here is the strictly logical scheme that has given the presentation a peculiar form. We can see yet more. When we try to work nearer to the fount of the origins of this pattern in the presentation, and seek as our next task, to uncover the channels in which this tradition flowed, highly interesting phenomena come to the fore.

The first element in this carefully prepared disposition that springs to the eye is the character of the logical scheme which governs the treatment of the material. Each book is examined from the angle of *intentio*, *utile*, *cuiusnam auctoris sit liber*, *ordo*,

<sup>34</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>35</sup> αὐτὴν τε τοῦ μεγάλου Ἰακώβου τὴν ἐπιστολὴν καὶ τὰς ἐξῆς τῶν ἄλλων ἀποκηρύττει καθολικῶς, LEONTIOS, *Contra Nestorianos*, col. 1366.

<sup>36</sup> Παρὰ Σύροις δὲ εἰ μὴ αἱ τρεῖς μόναι αἱ προγεγραμμέναι οὐχ εὐρίσκονται, λέγω δὴ Ἰακώβου καὶ Πέτρου καὶ Ἰωάννου· αἱ ἄλλαι γὰρ οὐδὲ κεῖνται παρὰ αὐτοῖς, COSMAS, *Topographia christiana*, col. 373.

<sup>37</sup> *De partibus*, I, 8, col. 20.

<sup>38</sup> Aut ex titulis et prooemiis, ut propheticos libros, et apostolorum epistolas, *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Aut ex titulis tantum, et evangelistas, *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Aut ex traditione veterum, ut Moyses creditur scripsisse quinque primos libros historiae; cum non dicat hoc titulus, nec referat, *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Quod ideo credendum est divinitus dispensatum, ut alii quoque divini Libri non auctorum merito, sed sancti Spiritus gratia tantum culmen auctoritatis obtinuisse noscantur, *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 9, col. 20.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 10, col. 20.

<sup>44</sup> Veteris intentio est, Novum figuris denuntiationibusque monstrare: Novi autem, ad aeternae beatitudinis gloriam humanas mentes accendere, *ibid.*

*causa inscriptionis, divisio in capita, et ad quid referetur.* This sevenfold woof carrying the treatment of the material leads us directly to the treasury of the logical conceptions of Aristotle<sup>45</sup>. These are the same seven aspects which were made available to the Syrians through the translation of the works of Aristotle, as they appear in a Syriac commentary on *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*<sup>46</sup>. Here the principle that, before any book is used, certain aspects must be kept in mind, come to the fore. They are : purpose<sup>47</sup>, usefulness<sup>48</sup>, origin<sup>49</sup>, order<sup>50</sup>, cause<sup>51</sup>, division<sup>52</sup> and subject<sup>53</sup>. In a Syriac commentary on the Isagogy of Porphyrios these appear as : purpose, usefulness, order, cause, division, authorship and subject<sup>54</sup>. A cycle of six aspects also occurs<sup>55</sup> as does a cycle of eight<sup>56</sup>.

Something else has to be added to these observations. In the *Instituta* the examination of each text is carried out from the point of view of : *genus, species, differentia, proprium et accidens*. This pattern is nothing other than the conceptions in the Isagogy of Porphyrios on the logic of Aristotle<sup>57</sup>. These conceptions<sup>58</sup> were also made available in Syriac<sup>59</sup>. Here we stand face to face with the provenance of the conceptions which were applied systematically to the treatment of the materials in the biblical literature.

Thus the *Organon* of Aristotle and the 'quinque voces' of Porphyrios emerge as the sources from which the premises for the method were borrowed. Every movement has been determined

<sup>45</sup> *Organon*, p. 39 ff.

<sup>46</sup> *De hermeneuticis*, p. 62.

<sup>47</sup> ܠܬܘܒ, σκοπός, intentio.

<sup>48</sup> ܠܬܘܒܬܐ, χρήσιμον, utile.

<sup>49</sup> ܕܠܬܘܒܬܐ ܡܬܕܬܬܐ ܕܬܘܒܬܐ, τὸ γνήσιον, cuiusnam sit ἀκριβῶς.

<sup>50</sup> ܠܬܘܒܬܐ, τάξις, ordo.

<sup>51</sup> ܠܬܘܒܬܐ ܠܬܘܒܬܐ, αἰτία τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς, causa inscriptionis.

<sup>52</sup> ܠܬܘܒܬܐ ܠܬܘܒܬܐ, ἡ εἰς τὰ κεφάλαια διαίρεσις, divisio in capita.

<sup>53</sup> ܠܬܘܒܬܐ ܕܬܘܒܬܐ, καὶ ὑπὸ ποῖον ἀνάγεται, et ad quid referatur.

<sup>54</sup> RENAN, *De philosophia perip. apud Syros*, p. 41.

<sup>55</sup> JOHANNES PHILOPONOS, *Commentarius*, XIII, I.

<sup>56</sup> The eighth is : ὁ διδασκαλικὸς τρόπος.

<sup>57</sup> Περὶ τῶν πέντε φωνῶν.

<sup>58</sup> γένος, εἶδος, διαφορά, ἴδιον, συμβεβηκός.

<sup>59</sup> Translated by Paulos of Ardašir, *Anecdota syriaca*, IV, p. 6 ff.

by these principles<sup>60</sup>. This is the mold which has given the manual of Paulos on the biblical isagogic its logical scheme, methodical character and a peculiar charm.

Since we have in our possession such a precious source, an exponent which brings us into the practice of instruction in the classroom situation, we must not neglect to glimpse also into the teaching of biblical theology<sup>61</sup>. Our interest is the greater since the following part of the book furnishes principles for biblical exegesis. This is a treatment to which actually the greater part of this document is dedicated<sup>62</sup>.

This main part, too, reveals the same degree of logical discipline and deepens the observations already made. The material in the biblical books is handled in three parts, dealing with God, the present world and the future world.

The first section discusses God's essence and power, analyzes the names, and deals with God's actions in creation, providence and preparation for the coming age<sup>63</sup>.

The second<sup>64</sup> is a discussion divided into five subjects : creation<sup>65</sup>, the rule over the world<sup>66</sup>, accidents<sup>67</sup>, the characteristics of the will<sup>68</sup> — something that deeply concerned the Syrians as is shown by their most ancient traditions<sup>69</sup> — and the actions that grow out of the free will<sup>70</sup>.

The third part<sup>71</sup> falls into four subsections : calling<sup>72</sup>, typology<sup>73</sup>,

<sup>60</sup> KIHN, *Theodor von Mopsuestia*, p. 337 ff.

<sup>61</sup> De his quae Scriptura sacra nos edocet, *De partibus*, I, 11, col. 21.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 11-20; II, 1-25.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 12-20, col. 21-26.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 1-13, col. 25-32.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 2, col. 25-28.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 3-10, col. 28-31.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 11, col. 31.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 12, col. 31.

<sup>69</sup> VÖÖBUS, *Human Nature in Syriac Traditions*, p. 109 ff.

<sup>70</sup> *De partibus* II, 13, col. 31-32.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 14-25, col. 32-41.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 15, col. 32 f.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 16-17, col. 33 f.

which contains principles for hermeneutics<sup>74</sup>, predications<sup>75</sup> and fulfillment<sup>76</sup>.

The work ends with an appendix<sup>77</sup>.

The logical scheme that permeates the process of analysis of this material is as ostentatious as it is in the part that deals with isagogic issues. The aspects which shine forth at every step are : *substantia, quantum, quale, relatum?, ubi?, quando?, situm esse, habere, facere, et pati*. In Greek dress<sup>78</sup> they lead us to the categories of Aristotle<sup>79</sup>. These were made available in Syriac by the translation-work of Paulos and find their Syriac equivalents there<sup>80</sup>.

Once again, we see how the logical categories of Aristotle have molded the explication of biblical-theological materials in such a way that they gave lucidity and clarity to the exposition particularly important for a treatment designed as a textbook for the classroom situation. These qualities guaranteed for this work a great future even far beyond the boundaries for many centuries<sup>81</sup>.

All in all, in the light of this biblical-theological propaedeutic the advanced and refined stage in instruction is now clearly in view<sup>82</sup>. It remains only to underline its importance.

In connection with the questions of instruction and the curriculum it is finally necessary to clarify whether we have another source at our disposal. This discussion will give us an opportunity to

<sup>74</sup> D. Quot sunt typorum vel figurarum modi? M. Principaliter quatuor. Aut enim grata gratis significantur, aut moesta moestis; aut grata moestis, aut gratis moesta... Grata quidem gratis significantur, ut Domini secundum carnem resurrectio et in coelis habitatio, formae nostrae resurrectionis, et futurae justis in coelo habitationis indicium... Moesta vero moestis praefigurantur, ut diaboli angelorumque ejus dejectio, et futurae poenae repromissio, figura est eorum qui pro similitudine operum poenis similibus detrudentur... Tertius modus est, cum moestis grata significantur, ut Adae transgressio typus fuit justitiae Salvatoris nostri... Quartus modus est, cum gratis moesta figurantur, ut baptisma; etenim figura est mortis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, *ibid.*, II, 17, col. 34.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 18-24, col. 34-41.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 25, col. 41.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 26-30, col. 41 f., dealing with the principles for hermeneutics and with the inspiration.

<sup>78</sup> οὐσία, ποσόν, ποιόν, πρὸς τι, ποῦ, πότε, κείσθαι, ἔχειν, ποιεῖν, πάσχειν.

<sup>79</sup> Categ. IV-IX. *Organon*, I, p. 83 ff.

<sup>80</sup> *Anecdota syriaca*, IV, p. 10.

<sup>81</sup> See page 192 ff.

<sup>82</sup> VöÖBUS, *Abraham de-Bēt Rabban and his Rôle*, p. 212 ff.

learn more about the arrangements made for the school year in the School of Nisibis.

There is a source which claims to be able to increase our information concerning the sequence of the courses in biblical studies when it lists : in the first year the first part of the *bēt mautbē*<sup>83</sup>, the work of Paulos and the Torah, in the second year the second part of the *bēt mautbē*, the Psalter, the prophets and the liturgical texts, in the third year the third part of the *bēt mautbē*, the New Testament and the liturgical texts. This is a source which in the legislative sources is presented as embodying the rules of the School of Nisibis<sup>84</sup>. This claim that still another piece of the legislation of the School of Nisibis has come down to us, naturally arouses our particular interest.

However, the first acquaintance with this source leaves us with dubious feelings. Its credentials are not in solid order. While 'Abdišō' introduces this text in his work of codification under the title : 'Of the School of Nisibis' the heading in an older stream of tradition available to Ibn at-Ṭaiyib is simply 'Teachers'<sup>85</sup>. Such a situation does not encourage one to trust this claim.

A closer examination of this source leads to decisive conclusion. The intrinsic evidence furnishes us with several clues which demonstrate that the situation current in the place where this text originated, does not fit with the traditions and conditions prevalent in the School of Nisibis. With regard to the period during which the School of Nisibis was in session we are not left in the dark. Our information concerns not only the older practice introduced by Narsai but also the later practice. The older practice laid down in the statutes provided only for one session with a fixed pattern so that the school was in recess from August until October<sup>86</sup>. We are told that later on this system was found impracticable and was changed. The work of the school was reorganized so that there were two sessions, the *mautbā* of the summer and that of the winter<sup>87</sup>. The change was prompted by the seasonal necessities of

<sup>83</sup> *Bēt mautbē* is a liturgical term and indicates a part of a service sung while sitting. Here it is used in a particular sense.

<sup>84</sup> 'Abdišō', *Nomocanon*, p. 273.

<sup>85</sup> *Fiqh an-naṣrāniya*, II, p. 161.

<sup>86</sup> Can. V, *Statutes*, p. 77f.

<sup>87</sup> BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 393.

harvest which were so important that they had to be taken into account. The new school year is described in the following way : 'Likewise also the fathers have done in that they have fixed for us the two services in two seasons : first the period of the summer-harvest, and then the *mautbā* of the Apostles; first the period of the winter, the work on the figs and olives, and then the *mautbā* of the winter'<sup>88</sup>. That means that the first *mautbā* came after the harvest of the grain and the second after the harvest of the fruit. These arrangements are different from the conditions pictured in our source<sup>89</sup>.

Furthermore at the School of Nisibis the students had to take care of their own provisions while the school took responsibility for very poor and disabled students<sup>90</sup>. According to the source under discussion, however, the school followed a different policy<sup>91</sup>.

Finally, if the plus which appears in the Arabic recension of the text under discussion <sup>92</sup> stems from the same source, still another feature emerges which once more does not fit with the situation current at the School of Nisibis. This aspect concerns the textbook for exegetical studies adopted for the school as normative <sup>93</sup>.

As this examination shows the source under discussion must stem from another school and must have been ascribed to the School of Nisibis <sup>94</sup>.

[illegible]

<sup>89</sup> According to this source there was but one *bēl maubā* the beginning of which was contingent upon the question whether or not the school was able to provide 'bread' for the students, 'ΑΒΔΙΘΩ', *Nomocanon*, p. 161.

<sup>90</sup> See page 114 f., cf. p. 272.

<sup>91</sup> Normally that school provided maintenance for its students and they had to take care of their own livelihood only if the school was not able to feed them, 'ABDIŠO', *Nomocanon*, p. 161.

<sup>92</sup> IBN AṬ-ṬAIYIB, *Fiqh an-naṣrāniya*, II, p. 162.

<sup>93</sup> Besides the text of the Scriptures students who were preparing for the priesthood were required to study also 'a short commentary by Mār Ephrēm' and 'a long one by Mār Theodore'. This symbiosis of the exegetical works of Ephrēm and Theodore of Mopsuestia is very interesting and indicates a trend different from that characteristic of the School of Nisibis, where Theodore had been made normative.

<sup>94</sup> See also *Statutes*, Appendix, p. 109ff.

# 10. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SCHOOL TO THE WORLD OF LETTERS

Close acquaintance with the Syriac literature produced in this period reveals the fact that the School of Nisibis was a strong influence in the shaping of the literary milieu. Men with gifts in the field of literary culture were stimulated at this centre of learning in Nisibis. By breathing in that spiritual atmosphere, they were brought to literary creation. We can even speak of an outburst in literary works.

The new impulse, however, cannot be measured only in terms of quantity. It displays variety in character as well. The poetic genre fructuated by the first director was replaced by prose. As it gained dominance, wide vistas for new possibilities were opened. Thus new genres were initiated, developed and cultivated. Among the teachers who put their pens at the disposal of promoting literature, of enriching literary creativeness, we see authors of very different interests. These creative forces were turned in various directions in order to nurture a variety of needs. In fact, the advancement from the times of Narsai is very marked. In order to touch upon only the main lines of development, it suffices to mention, the historical studies made by Abraham<sup>1</sup>, Išai<sup>2</sup> and Jōhannān of Bēt Rabban<sup>3</sup>, the liturgico-historical ones by Thomas of Edessa<sup>4</sup> and Qīiōrē<sup>5</sup>, the polemical writings produced by Paulos<sup>6</sup> and Thomas of Edessa<sup>7</sup>, the apologetic work produced by Jōhannān of Bēt Rabban<sup>8</sup>, and works in the area of jurisprudence<sup>9</sup>.

A special word must be reserved for philological studies. We have information about the grammatical works of Jāusep Hūzāiā<sup>10</sup> and perhaps Rāmīšō<sup>11</sup>. Among all the branches of study the paleo-

<sup>1</sup> See page 142.

<sup>2</sup> See page 175.

<sup>3</sup> See page 216.

<sup>4</sup> See page 173 f.

<sup>5</sup> See page 174 f.

<sup>6</sup> See page 172.

<sup>7</sup> See page 173.

<sup>8</sup> See page 215 f.

<sup>9</sup> See page 166.

<sup>10</sup> See page 160 f., cf. 197 ff.

<sup>11</sup> See page 176, cf. 200 ff.

graphical and grammatical studies seem to have found special attention and devotion. In the light of the literary data, and above all of the manuscript evidence, it becomes clear that the teachers in the School of Nisibis were first ones to cultivate this area of scholarship with all eagerness and success. Very important impulses emanated from this center and certainly created interest in these studies elsewhere.

To these must be added the area of Graeco-Syro translation literature in which Mār Abā was particularly productive<sup>12</sup>.

In the spiritual climate of the School, minds were prepared and ripened for intense scholarly work. Sparks were thrown into the hearts of young men in such a way that they were prepared to devote themselves to the scholarly pursuit and literary creation. For some this resulted in unusual productivity. The outstanding figure in this respect is Mār Abā, in whose literary creation the amplitude reached its widest range. Another star that arose from the atmosphere in the School of Nisibis into the sky of Eastern Syrian scholarship is Ḥenānā, whose work covered the exegetical and theological fields. We shall meet him later. Lesser figures cannot be introduced here.

While we must restrain our interest and curiosity and remain content with occasional splinters of information, nevertheless that which we are permitted to piece together from these fragments gives us a picture which — however fragmentary — is illuminating enough. It stimulates our estimate about that which more information might reveal.

That the last remark does not stay far from the mark is indicated by other observations. While our sources are very terse on the other genre of literature, they allow us to take a closer look at one area. Here we cannot be indebted enough to our sources because what we are enabled to see is full recompense for the paucity of information in other areas. The area concerned is that of exegetical and biblical studies.

In the exegetical field, the appearance of the work of Abraham of Bēt Rabban opens up new perspectives. A real impetus is put in relief. This work must be assessed as an inauguration of a new era in exegetical and biblical studies. It is necessary to make this

<sup>12</sup> See page 167 f.

statement more precise, since we have to do with a complex situation. There are factors which in cooperation brought new life into the biblical disciplines and their literary treatment.

First, Theodore of Mopsuestia is a source of the new inspiration. This hangs together with Abraham's endeavors to make his rich exegetical heritage more useful. The integration of the hermeneutic work of Theodore into the stream of exegetical work was achieved <sup>13</sup>. This undertaking must be regarded as a great advance in the process of instruction and study.

Secondly Abraham brought his own gifts and talents to bear upon the fructuation of the field. His faculties were regarded as extraordinary, excelling those of his great uncle and they earned him wide admiration throughout the country <sup>14</sup>. In this respect a new epoch dawned with the man who was able to put new life into the functions of the *mepašqānā*. This life he fostered to such a degree that it was felt a new era for the cultivation of the biblical exegesis had begun.

Thirdly, his cooperation with some congenial spirits is another factor. Abā's role we must leave open. We cannot see through his part in this. But the close cooperation Abraham fostered with his colleague Jōhannān of Bēt Rabban <sup>15</sup>, an eminent representative in the field of biblical exegesis, constituted another component in this constellation of circumstances.

The combination of these circumstances resulted in the creation of the school tradition, something which has no parallel in the fruits created by other foci of intellectual culture. For we cannot really count the tradition of the School of Edessa as a real parallel since it was created by one single author, Ephrēm, and could not retain its place in the same school for any length of time <sup>16</sup>. What was created in the School of Nisibis was something to which level the scholarly strength of later generations was never able to rise. Thus in its own special way, this renaissance earned a reputation for the school. Something was created in the exegetical work and thinking which was so comprehensive that it was able to secure its future for a long time.

<sup>13</sup> See page 137 f.

<sup>14</sup> VÖÖBUS, *Abraham de-Bēt Rabban and his Role*, p. 204 ff.

<sup>15</sup> See page 211 ff.

<sup>16</sup> See page 14 f.



The inner circle sets vibration in movement and causes wide circles. We can be certain that the spirit of such an atmosphere produced reactions in others. The force which new insights and perceptions generate always provokes stimulation and galvanization. Our inquiry demonstrates this beyond every expectation, for all comes not from the Syriac sources but from a quite unexpected quarter. What we see in an interesting manual written by one who himself was educated in the School of Nisibis, brings us within the walls of the classroom in the School of Nisibis. It is almost unbelievable that a window is opened for us through which important insights regarding the instruction in biblical isagogic and theology become possible<sup>28</sup>. We get a glimpse of the refinement of the method, the suavity of the treatment and the charm of the execution which had been invested in the discipline. The advanced and refined stage, initiated, inspired and stimulated by the work of Abraham, in one of its exponents, is now clearly in view. That all this constantly sought for literary expression is self-evident.

This isagogic manual of Paulos was considered so useful that it was put on the list of required books next to the Scriptures. This is shown in a rule which describes the work required from beginners of the three year course in a school which we can no longer identify<sup>29</sup>. It is better to let the source to have the floor: 'The first year they shall write first part of the *bēt mautbē*, the book of Paulos and the Torah'<sup>30</sup>. There is no doubt that this work which also appears with the biblical books was the manual of Paulos.

In assessing the significance of the renaissance in exegetical and biblical studies and the stimuli for scholarly work and literary creation in these fields not all has been said in the foregoing. Another aspect is available to us to help in measuring these stimuli. What we are allowed to see, is, indeed, amazing. The stimuli of the center of higher learning in Nisibis spread in ever wider circles from which expansion we can make deductions of an extraordinary character. The accomplishments in the above-mentioned fields were of such a nature that they aroused attention and interest even

does not enable us to be more precise: the earliest codex, Ms. Seert 28, was of the 14th century, SCHER, *Catalogue*, p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> See page 179 ff.

<sup>29</sup> See the discussion in the appendix, *Statutes*, p. 109 ff.

<sup>30</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Nomocanon*, VI, 3, p. 272 f.

outside the domain of the Empire of the Sassanides, yes, even far beyond the confines of the Syriac idiom! In this respect, Paulos is the most interesting case<sup>31</sup>. Junilius calls him 'the Persian' — such an introduction of an East Syrian by a Westerner<sup>32</sup> is predictable. Paulos published his writings in the Greek idiom, and the literary work produced by Paulos made a deep impression upon Junilius. We are informed that he even translated one of his works<sup>33</sup> into Latin<sup>34</sup>. It is regrettable that this important figure does not come more clearly into the light. The only way to avoid speculation adventure is to stay close to the source itself<sup>35</sup>. It is clear that Paulos was a teacher<sup>36</sup> and that other writings had already brought him reputation in the literary field<sup>37</sup>. Some of these have survived<sup>38</sup>.

Thus we see that the renown of the School of Nisibis did not remain within the boundaries of East Syrian Christianity<sup>39</sup>. In Constantinople, we have interesting vestiges of open admiration from Junilius. This case speaks loudly enough. Moreover, admiration appears even in distant places. The dedicatory preface of the translation of the manual of Paulos is addressed to Primasius, bishop of Hadrumentum in North Africa<sup>40</sup> who had become interested in the work produced in the School of Nisibis. The tracing of these

<sup>31</sup> See page 179 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Ad haec ego respondi, vidiſſe me quendam Paulum nomine, Persam genere, qui in Syrorum schola in Nisibi urbe est edoctus, ubi divina lex per magistros publicos, sicut apud nos in mundanis studiis grammatica et rhetorica, ordine ac regulariter traditur, *De partibus*, Introductio, col. 15.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 15 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Haec tu, Pater, nescio qua ratione omnibus Christianis erudiri volentibus necessaria judicasti, excusantemque me diu usque ad defensionis impudentiam compulisti : unde in duos brevissimos libellos regularia haec instituta collegi, addens ipsius dictionis (quantum potui) utilem formam, ut velut discipulis interrogantibus et magistro respondente, breviter, singula et perlucide dicerentur, *ibid.*, col. 16.

<sup>35</sup> See page 170 ff.

<sup>36</sup> Tunc diu quaesitus, si quid ex eius dictis haberem, dixi, quod legissem regulas quasdam, quibus ille discipulorum animos divinarum Scripturarum superficie instructos, priusquam expositionis profunda patefaceret, solebat inbuere, *De partibus*, col. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Sunt alia illius viri praeclara monumenta : nam et beati Pauli ad Romanos epistolam audiavi subtilius (ut arbitror) exponentem ; quam ego ex eius ore, ne memoria laberetur, excepi, *ibid.*, col. 16.

<sup>38</sup> See page 172.

<sup>39</sup> Vööbus, *Abraham de-Bêt Rabban's Rôle*, p. 213 f.

vestiges leads us to still greater surprises. The curtain of history is suddenly lifted and phenomena which crown our investigation emerge before our amazed eyes. These vestiges lead us farther to the West. In fact, they bring us to the heart of Europe.

The School of Nisibis seems to have stood as an inspiring example before the eyes of Cassiodorus <sup>41</sup>. What we learn from him tells us more of his admiration for it. The School of Nisibis did not only win his attention but also inspired a dream for such a center of higher learning and the plans to establish such a school for higher theological studies in Rome, in cooperation with the Pope Agapetus <sup>42</sup>. To be sure, the difficult political circumstances prevented him from materializing his efforts. Nevertheless, though his dreams remained dreams and the times were too rough for such a tender plant, the fact remains that the incentive came from the School of Nisibis.

Besides the inspiration for his plans which Cassiodorus drew from the School of Nisibis, he also received stimuli for literary creation in the quietness of his Vivarium — 'an asylum of literature and the liberal arts'. What he produced became the standard text-books of the monastic schools for centuries during the Middle-Ages in Europe. One of the fruits of the intellectual life in the School of Nisibis to which Cassiodorus looked with reverence is explicitly mentioned. The work to which he himself owed much is the manual of Paulos <sup>43</sup>. This he used for instruction and recommended it for study to his monks <sup>44</sup>.

This reference to the importance of the manual of Paulos is something we can investigate still farther. The rôle of this work in the following centuries can be placed in a proper perspective.

An unmistakable indication regarding the popularity of the work

<sup>40</sup> *De partibus*, col. 15 f.

<sup>41</sup> *Institutiones*, col. 1105 f.

<sup>42</sup> Nisus sum ergo cum beatissimo Agapeto papa urbis Romae, ut sicut apud Alexandriam multo tempore fuisse traditur institutum, nunc etiam in Nisibi civitate Syrorum ab Hebraeis sedulo fertur exponi collatis expensis in urbe Romana professos doctores scholae potius acciperent christianae, unde et anima susciperet aeternam salutem, et casto atque purissimo eloquio fidelium lingua comeretur, *ibid.*, col. 1105 f. The reading 'Hebraeis' is obviously a mistake for 'hebraice'.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 10.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

of Paulos appears in the number of manuscripts. The substantial number of codices speaks for itself. Thirteen codices of the translation by Junilius were known previously<sup>45</sup>. New codices have emerged, increasing the number<sup>46</sup>. Additional information can be drawn from the catalogs of the mediaeval libraries in the monastic communities<sup>47</sup>. In the light of these facts the manual of Paulos appears as a school book whether we regard it as a dialogue<sup>48</sup> or a catechism<sup>49</sup> — a question which already confused the copyists<sup>50</sup> — which for centuries was used in the monastic schools during the Middle-Ages.

The rôle of the manual of Paulos can be supplemented by the references to it which appear in the mediaeval authors. It is interesting to see smaller or longer references in Aldhelm in England<sup>51</sup>, in the *Liber glossarum*<sup>52</sup> and an anonymous collection of patristic passages<sup>53</sup> which was composed in France, and in Wigbod<sup>54</sup> in Germany. In the light of these data, we see that this work on biblical exegesis produced in the School of Nisibis was known and in use in the Middle-Ages all over the continent of Europe and in England.

Thus the intellectual life generated in the School of Nisibis especially in the area of biblical exegesis was so forceful that it

<sup>45</sup> KIHN, *Theodor von Mopsuestia*, p. 302 ff.

<sup>46</sup> LAISTNER, *Antiochene Exegesis*, p. 24 ff.

<sup>47</sup> BECKER, *Catalogi bibliothecarum*, II, 98; 37; 368; 26, 8; DELISLE, *Cabinet des manuscrits*, II, p. 472.

<sup>48</sup> So Kihn understood the Greek capital letters Δ and Μ to mean that the questions come from the pupil and the answers are given by the teacher, *Theodor von Mopsuestia*, p. 471 ff. In this case the Latin translation retained their meaning in the original Greek of 'teacher' and 'disciple'.

<sup>49</sup> So RAHLFS, *Lehrer und Schüler*, p. 242 f. The capital letters in this case represent Latin Discipulus and Magister. In this case, the questions come from the teacher and the answers from the disciple who has memorized them.

<sup>50</sup> 'Et ne aliqua confusio per antiquariorum, ut adsolet, negligentiam proveniret, magistro Δ graecam litteram, discipulis Μ praeposui', in the introductory letter to Primasius in Cod. D. However in Aldhelm's codex this text runs as follows: 'ne aliqua confusio... negligentiam proveniret, magistro Μ graccam litteram, discipulis Δ praeposui'.

<sup>51</sup> *De metris*, p. 81 f.

<sup>52</sup> *Glossaria latina*, I, PR 349; PR 2008; PR 3147; TI 154; VO 94.

<sup>53</sup> Ms. Regin. 76.

<sup>54</sup> *Questiones in octateuchum*, col. 1106 ff.

could exercise its power even in Europe. There it could wait and ripen for fuller development long after the center of vital stimuli and fruitful impulses in Bēt 'Arbāiē had disappeared from the stage of history.

#### 11. CONTRIBUTION OF THE SCHOOL TO THE SYRIAC MASSORAH

On the basis of the information our sources offer, though limited and scanty, we are entitled to speak of the contribution the school made to the development of the Syriac Massorah in its various segments.

First, the segment having to do with the diacritical sign system. The difficulty of writing down with precision the expression of the language early led to find ways of overcoming it. The handicap of dealing with the ambiguity of the written text in which the possibility of misunderstanding arising from this situation was always imminent, compelled the teachers in the School of Nisibis to find ways of avoiding it. The instruction already necessitated this and we can safely assume such to be the case even without direct information. What we have in our sources is little more than a reference to the fact that lists of homonyms were composed. We hear that Jāusep Hūzāiā produced such a list<sup>1</sup>. Only in part can we regain an idea of the nature of this list<sup>2</sup>. With this little we must be content.

But in another and more important segment our sources begin to flow more freely. This is concerned with the area of the accents. The importance ascribed to them by the Syrians is reflected in the manuscripts which display a manifold system of signs. The interest in such systems is directly related to the liturgical use of the biblical texts. The greatest care had to be taken to secure the recitation of the lessons in conformity with the cultic pattern in the tradition. But to produce such a correct public reading, the reader had to be provided with help and assistance. It required a system of symbols to guide the reciter in the performance of the lessons.

<sup>1</sup> See page 160.

<sup>2</sup> One such list of the seventh century with additions by later hands has survived; see *Opuscula nestoriana*, p. 2 ff.

As the manuscript evidence shows<sup>3</sup> accents were still at their initial stage when the diacritical points were developed into a system. It is possible to follow to a certain extent the gradual growth and evolution of this process before the doctrinal separation. A common stock of accents can be reconstructed<sup>4</sup>. But the development did not come to an end at the time of the christological controversy. Its further history falls into the period after the separation. This is clearly illustrated by manuscript evidence<sup>5</sup> which shows that new accents produced as genuine and native<sup>6</sup> Syriac signs were prompted by East Syrian liturgical genius<sup>7</sup>. This is the point at which our inquiry begins.

If one particular codex would not have survived, almost all of our information, scanty as it is, regarding the contribution of the School of Nisibis would have been lost as was all the rest of such data. This reminds us how delicate the situation is in regard to the sources. We owe our information to a manuscript which is a qualified witness. It is the most important document for the elucidation of the textual criticism of the East Syrian tradition<sup>8</sup>. It is a corpus of the Syriac Massorah, presenting the more difficult words and clauses in the biblical texts with critical notes and explanatory annotations, produced under the careful hands of Mar Bābai, a scribe<sup>9</sup>. The scholarly interest and care he invested in his work makes this document invaluable.

First let us listen to what he knows generally about the rôle of the School of Nisibis in this regard. In the textual critical material at his disposal, he sets carefully apart a tradition which stems

<sup>3</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,150, written in 411, unfolds a diacritical system in a developed form; however very little can be seen of the system of accents in this manuscript.

<sup>4</sup> Namely from the lists of the East and West Syrian accents taking out the accents which appear in both lists as common elements.

<sup>5</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,460 is the best example. It is dated, written in the year 600.

<sup>6</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,178, fol. 232a claims that among the Greek inventors of the 10 symbols was also Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis. We may dismiss this claim without ado.

<sup>7</sup> The view that these were invented by the Greek grammarians, cf. DUVAL, *Traité de grammaire*, p. 137 ff., cannot be taken seriously. See SEGAL, *Diacritical Point*, p. 62 f.

<sup>8</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,138, fol. 1b ff.

<sup>9</sup> He was a deacon in the Monastery of Mār Gabri'el near Ḥarrān.



single codex and we are not in a position to test whether all the details have been accurately preserved in the course of transmission. Whether some names of the accents have suffered in this process or not and whatever view we may take of the need to conjecture the text<sup>15</sup>, it does not concern us in this connection since this does not affect the value of the source for historical purposes: the vital turning point in the development of the accents is related to a man who was a teacher in the School of Nisibis<sup>16</sup>. And vital it must be since the system he introduced — whether by sole invention or by employment of some older elements is no longer ascertainable — became the very basis<sup>17</sup> for the further development and the ongoing evolution. It was so decisive that it set the direction and determined the way towards the completion of the system<sup>18</sup>.

Besides the preceding document there is also a tradition preserved by Mari: 'And after him (i.e. Jōḥannān de-Bēt Rabban) Jāusep al-Ahwazi, and he is the author of the punctuation by means of 9 points'<sup>19</sup>. What is the source behind this information cannot be found out.

An additional bit of information which supplements the picture we are evincing from our sources, comes from another source. One of the accents, the 'eṣiānā, is called *mašlemānūtā*<sup>20</sup> in the marginal notes of the witness we have been consulting<sup>21</sup>. This finds echo in another source which also is significant. The accent is introduced under the same name by Bar 'Ebrāiā<sup>22</sup>. More important is the fact that he describes it as a specific East Syrian sign and when he explains its name, he leads us to another interesting vestige.

<sup>15</sup> See conjectures for the text by SEGAL, *Diacritical Point*, p. 66.

<sup>16</sup> See page 160 f.

<sup>17</sup> Of this we can get a glimpse in the light of comparative analysis of the lists of the accents at our disposal.

<sup>18</sup> Graphically this is illustrated by the three lists set in parallel columns: that of Jāusep Hūzāiā, that of Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,138 and that of the grammar of Eliiā of Tīrhan, WEISS, *Zur ostsyr. Lautlehre*, p. 32 ff.

<sup>19</sup> *De patriarchis*, وبعده يوسف الاهوازي وهو صاحب الفحّام بتسعة نقط p. 45<sub>4</sub>.

<sup>20</sup> 'Tradition'.

<sup>21</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,138, fol. 5b, 9b.

<sup>22</sup> *Ketābā de-ṣemḥē*, IV, 6, p. 255.



work on punctuation says that Jāusep Hūzāiā, Hēnanīšō', Rāmīšō' and others have composed works on punctuation<sup>28</sup>.

With these references our interest in Rāmīšō' increases. Who was Rāmīšō'? By this question we are led into many difficulties for which we have no guidance in our sources.

If we allow ourselves to be moved by the impression by Bābai, the copyist of the corpus of the Syriac Massorah, we would look towards the School of Nisibis as the possible place for Rabban Rāmīšō'. He seems to give us a hint in this direction. Dealing with the same accent quoted by Bar 'Ebrāiā <sup>29</sup>, he remarks : 'And this is the sign in all the writings of the School' <sup>30</sup>. The impression given is that his work belongs to the tradition which despite various strata, nevertheless grew up systematically under the hands of a team of scholars. This is faint, very faint, but it is all we have. Whether Rāmīšō' can be identified with the same Rāmīšō' who appears on the staff of the teachers of the school <sup>31</sup> must remain open.

There is another homonym with whom Rāmīšō' has been identified. This comes from a rival fold which is not Nestorian<sup>32</sup>. On the activities of this man we have some interesting data<sup>33</sup> which

<sup>28</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 616, fol. 20a; cf. Jōhannān bar Zō'bī in his tract justifying his treatise on grammar, *ibid.*, fol. 36b ff; Ms. Kerk. 45, cah. 3, fol. 7a ff.

<sup>29</sup> See footnote 22.

<sup>30</sup> കേരളം കേരളം കേരളം Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,138, fol. 309b.

<sup>31</sup> See page 176.

<sup>32</sup> Dewid bar Paulos in one of his letters sent to Bishop Jōhannān, gives an account about Rabban Sabrōi of Ramatšir who founded a Jacobite school in Bêt Šāhān, near Ninive, and carried out instruction there in cooperation with his sons Rāmīšō' and Gabri'el, Ms. Mard. Orth. 158, fol. 21a. His sons were also in the Monastery of Mār Mattai.

<sup>33</sup> They employed the system of punctuation invented by their father and furnished codices with this system. He testifies that copies of such manuscripts were extant at his time, bearing a colophon to that effect : אנו מאמר ואלו הם כלל פסוקים חבובי רמיהם : דאעריהן הנה אמר המורה והנחמה בזה השם 'a memory exists for them in many manuscripts with the inscription : « punctuated and emended by Rāmīšō », and then by Gabri'el ', Ms. Mard. Orth. 158, fol. 23b. This work was continued by the sons of Rāmīšō'. Their activity is described in the following way : : משה היה גדול החכמים : ואחריו היו בניו הגדולים : ומתוך שהיו נמשכים אל הדעת , יצאו מהם אנשים אשר עסקו בדקדוק הפשט : והוא שיש בו טעם וחיות : כגון : ויתכן כי יש להם סודות : וזו היא הנחת העין : על פי הסדר הזה : ועל פי זה : והוא שיש לו סודות : וזו היא הנחת העין : על פי הסדר הזה : ועל פי זה :

have found confidence even with Baumstark<sup>34</sup>. In a question as important as the origin of the East Syrian Massorah, we are not prepared to fall into the arms of Dawid bar Paulos. It is adventurous on the basis of his story alone to draw conclusions which are so far-reaching. The proposition that other traditions in connection with the work on the system of the accents and its systematic development are undone by the story of Dawid is hardly probable, or even possible. One who is aware of the rift between the separated confessions and of its implications is rather cautious. The story is too splendid and too talkative. And if, indeed, it has no inferior motivation and is based on some historical facts, it may then enlighten some local phenomenon.

Finally, there is another important event in the gradual growth of the East Syrian Massorah, namely the introduction of the vowels. This must be regarded as a revolutionary event, opening up an entirely new phase in the history of the linguistic phenomena under inquiry.

What we are allowed to glimpse of this area is most unsatisfactory. We can see only some of the main lines of the development. These certainly lead us farther back than the beginning of the eighth century<sup>35</sup>. It is clear that an important foundation

the above-mentioned ones (excelling) their contemporaries, he gave them cells in the monastery, and both brought the same manuscript having no vowel-point or accent, and each of them entering his cell was adding the points', *ibid.*, fol. 24a. See also *Studia syriaca*, I. p. 45 f.

<sup>34</sup> 'Von seinen Söhnen wird der erstere nicht nur in jakobitischer Überlieferung mit der Erfindung des von den Nestorianern alsdann nur übernommenen Systems der Vokalbezeichnung durch Punkte in Verbindung gebracht. Er und nicht der gleichnamige Schüler Mār(j) Ab(h)ās I. ist vielmehr zweifellos der Verfasser einer auch vor späteren nestorianischen Grammatikern erwähnten Schrift über Punktation und der Urheber einer Schicht der nestorianischen Masora, die im Gesamtrahmen derselben scharf gegen deren auf die Schule von Nisibis zurückgehende Stammbestandteile abgegrenzt wird', *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 245 f.

<sup>35</sup> Martin suggested that the West Syrian vowel system, borrowed from the Greek is earlier and the East Syrian vowel system must be understood as a reaction to it 'En voyant les Syriens occidentaux emprunter aux Grecs leurs voyelles pour rendre les sons vocaliques, les Syriens orientaux furent provoqués à faire, eux aussi, quelque réforme semblable; et c'est alors sans doute qu'ils inventèrent le système de point voyelles nommé *chaldéo-nestorien*', *Histoire de la ponctuation*, p. 68. In this case the East Syrian system cannot be older than the first part of the 8th century, *ibid.*, p. 65. He also suggested Bābai, the founder of the schools, see THOMAS, *Historia monastic* II, 3, p. 143, as the possible inventor.

and footing must have been given to the development approximately at the time under discussion. This we can deduce from the evidence in the manuscripts. For on the one hand before the end of the century, the vowel signs were already a part of the Massorah. Their past history is illustrated by the fact that they are already distinguished from the diacritical point by their size<sup>36</sup>. On the other hand the time for further evolution and completion took generations. Thus it is safe to conclude that before the century reached its end, there must have been a longer period of important new insights and fruitful stimuli and experimentation with introduced symbols.

This suffices to indicate the magnitude of these happenings in another segment of the East Syriac Massorah. It is a matter of deep regret that we have no way of knowing how much of this development was fostered in the precincts of the School of Nisibis. There is no direct information except — perhaps — an echo<sup>37</sup>. In the light of what we have been able to see in other sectors of the East Syrian Massorah, we can only guess about the measure of the loss of data for elucidating the fuller history of this development. That the School of Nisibis with all its extended work in the area of the Syriac Massorah completely neglected this segment is unthinkable.

## 12. THE IMPACT OF THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL ON CHRISTIAN CULTURE

The School of Nisibis under Abraham had gained such a stature that its contribution to the life of the church had become inestimable. We get an idea of this when an attempt is made to give concreteness to this contention. In the attempt to ascertain the impact of the work, the capillaries cannot be submitted to an investigation. However, the main arteries that pulsated towards a new spiritual climate are traceable to a certain extent. What we see in the light of the activities of the alumni helps us to put this rôle in the entire scope of the church life into relief.

<sup>36</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,460.

<sup>37</sup> This seems to appear in the charge that Jäusep Hüzâiâ changed the Edessene pronunciation into that of the East Syrian, *Chronicon ecol.*, III, col. 78. Of course, we cannot take this seriously, however it may contain a remote echo of his contribution.

The greatest contribution the School of Nisibis made to Christendom under the Sassanides was certainly in the area of education. In this respect the school became a hot-bed which continuously produced contingents of teachers for the educational institutions of the church. Thereby the entire work carried out in these centers was rejuvenated. New teachers were sent out on a large scale basis. Younger and inspired men could take over positions in the schools of the villages, churches and monasteries and bring new life to the work in these places. Moreover the cadre of qualified teachers was enlarged. This created premises for the establishment of new schools thereby bringing about a denser network of the schools.

This was fresh blood that emanated from the School of Nisibis, pulsating a stream of new vigor, enthusiasm and strength into the existing channels. The effects of this life must have been felt in many ways in the area of educational endeavors.

This impulse in one respect was such that, despite our scanty sources, the memory of it could not get lost. A look at the alumni of the School of Nisibis who went down in history as founders of educational institutions provides us with clues. The most outstanding alumni live on in the memory of the tradition. Grīgōr of Kaškar<sup>1</sup> appears in the first line, famous for his founding of schools. After his service as a teacher in Ḥadiab, he went back to Kaškar and established a school with many students<sup>2</sup>. When he shifted his work to another village, he founded a new school<sup>3</sup>. Later, after he left the metropolitan-seat of Nisibis, in Bazzā de-Nahrawātā he established a monastery<sup>4</sup> and in this large monastery he founded another school<sup>5</sup>.

It seems that Mār Īšō'zekā, who was closely associated with Mār Sabrišō'<sup>6</sup>, was also an alumnus. The tradition gratefully remembers

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 507.

<sup>2</sup> ونصب اسكولاً واجتمع فيه ثلثمائة نفس 'he founded a school and gathered there 300 students (souls)', *ibid.*, p. 508.

<sup>3</sup> The name of the place is not given, but it is indicated that this village was in Kaškar, *ibid.*, p. 508.

<sup>4</sup> *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 513.

<sup>6</sup> See page 208.

him as a founder of three schools, one in Bêt 'Arbâiē <sup>7</sup> one in the mountains of Heftûn and Bêt Bagaš <sup>8</sup>, and one, founded in his old age, in Hadiab <sup>9</sup>.

The School of Nisibis was the very center of inspiration for such actions. What we are told in connection with Paulos whom Abraham, the head of the school, sent to Mār Ḥenānā, bishop of Arbēl, in order to establish a school there, for the purpose of intensifying the fight against the propaganda of the heterodox movements and of consolidating the church, is highly instructive in this respect : 'Mār Abraham the *mepašqānā*, gave to Mār Ḥenānā Paulos the *maḡreīānā* in order that he would establish a school for the children in the land of Ḥadiab in order to confirm the faith in their spirit and to protect it against the aggression<sup>10</sup> of the heretics and the *meṣaliānē*; and that Paulos remained with us for more than 30 years fulfilling the office that was entrusted to him by the heads of the church'<sup>11</sup>. This seems to contain a very significant note. It cannot have been an isolated episode.

The impact of the School of Nisibis extended far beyond the boundaries of the educational endeavor. The whole scope of the leadership for the church comes into account. Trained men were produced for the various positions in the church when qualified forces were needed. In this respect the School of Nisibis was operative in the constant improvement of the level of the clergy. We see alumni in positions of important congregations, occupying the sees of bishoprics and elevated to the seats of metropolitans and catholicoi. In fact, the School of Nisibis has held a unique position in the church in the light of the information at our disposal.

<sup>7</sup> וְהִנֵּה הָיָה מִן הַמָּוֶלֶת וְהָיָה מִן הַמָּוֶלֶת 'and here he established doctors and students'  
 IŠŌ'DENAH, *Livre de la chasteté*, XLVII, p. 29<sub>10</sub>.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29<sub>10-11</sub>.

<sup>9</sup> *כאן נאם ה' קיחם : כל־עוֹרָם קִיחָם מִן הַמָּוֶה וְהָיָה שָׂרֵי קִיחָם וְתַלְמִידֵיהֶם* 'and he established in it doctors and students; it is called after his name up to our day : Dairā de-Gašā of Išo'zekā, *ibid.*, p. 29<sub>15-16</sub>.

<sup>10</sup> Literally 'power' or 'strong current'.

[illegible]

The spiritual forces released by this center of higher learning in Nisibis were sufficient to revitalize still another stream of spiritual life — monasticism. Many who received inspiration here found their place of service in monasticism. New forces entered the life centered in the cells and monasteries, fostering the monastic institution. The visible effect of this appeared in the newly erected monasteries. Some alumni hold their place in the tradition as founders of new monasteries of unusual significance. Men like Grīgōr of Kaškar, the founder of several monasteries<sup>12</sup>, Bar 'Idtā, the founder of the famous community in the country of Margā<sup>13</sup>, laden with the spirit which led the inmates to establish new convents<sup>14</sup>, and Abraham of Kaškar, who established the famous monastery at the mountain of Īzlā<sup>15</sup>, are only the coryphaei<sup>16</sup> who in their importance have overshadowed the echelon of less outstanding founders.

Much more can be said in this respect. The accomplishments of one alumnus were destined to determine the further development of the entire monastic movement among the Eastern Syrians. The Nestorian monastic tradition knows no greater name than that of Abraham of Kaškar. Owing to the rôle he played in the development of coenobitism, Eastern Syrian Christianity has immortalized him by giving him the epithet *rabbā* 'the Great'. This man was destined to set monastic life in Persia on an entirely new footing. It was an historically important event when he, after the completion of his studies in the School of Nisibis<sup>17</sup>, retired to a cave at the Īzlā mountain, located in the vicinity of Nisibis. There later on, but before June 571<sup>18</sup>, he founded the Īzlā Monastery — the Great

<sup>12</sup> See page 205.

<sup>13</sup> Īšō'DENAḤ, *Livre de la chasteté*, XV, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> The same chapter includes also the names of a number of the inmates who became founders of monastic establishments.

<sup>15</sup> In Ṭūr-'Abdīn, near Nisibis. Tradition remembers as cofounders of the community : Bābai, Bābai, 'Abdīšō' and 'Eramiā, Ms. Mos. 124, fol. 101a.

<sup>16</sup> It should also be mentioned that Sabrišō', being on the catholicos' seat, used his personal authority at the court to rebuild the churches and monasteries which had been destroyed, PETROS, *Taš'itā de-Mūr Sabrišō'*, p. 306.

<sup>17</sup> Ms. Berl. Sach. 329, fol. 134a.

<sup>18</sup> The canons for the community were drawn up in June 571, ABRAHAM, *Qānūne*, p. 152.

Monastery — in the same place. Abraham's foundation is of special significance. For through it Abraham inaugurated something that developed into a reform movement. This in turn transformed the entire monastic phenomenon in Persia. Having been more or less independent, caused by the church-historical development which had brought about disappointments and setbacks to the ascetic elements<sup>19</sup>, they now became connected with the church. The rift was healed and the results were salutary as manifested by the rapid spread of reform-monasticism, reshaping the traditions by creating specific Nestorian features. In fact this undertaking proved to be a magnet which attracted multitudes. A new spirit swept over the country. Using the words of Thomas of Margā, the Īzlā Monastery became for the monks what Athens had been for the philosophers<sup>20</sup>. This is no overstatement. Multitudes received new inspiration here. And this was diffused all over the country. Furthermore, the stimuli produced a sort of chain-reaction which manifested itself in numerous new foundations.

Information taken from a lost work of Mār Zakā<sup>21</sup> and preserved in the work of Īšō'denaḥ<sup>22</sup> gives a grandiose picture of new establishments covering the whole area from Nisibis to Merv.

By these merits did Abraham become 'the head and the master of all the monks in the region of the Orient'<sup>23</sup>, or as Bābai, another of his disciples says: 'the head of the solitaries who was the first-born in the country of the Persians'<sup>24</sup>.

Another celebrity who carried on Abraham's work should not be forgotten in this connection. This is Dadišō' of Bēt Dāraiē in Bēt Arāmāiē, a man of great reputation and renown<sup>25</sup>. He also was an alumnus of the School of Nisibis. He was the man who became the successor of Abraham in the community of Īzlā Monastery. As the cycle of his rules shows<sup>26</sup>, he bound the monks

<sup>19</sup> VÖÖBUS, *Réformes de Barṣauma*, p. 29 ff.

<sup>20</sup> *Historia monastica*, I, 14, p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Ms. Berl. Sach. 329, fol. 135a-136a.

<sup>22</sup> *Livre de la chasteté*, XIV, p. 8, f.

<sup>23</sup> Ms. Berl. Sach. 329, fol. 132a.

<sup>24</sup> *Taš'ūtā de-Mār Giwargīs*, p. 424.

<sup>25</sup> THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, I, 5, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> *Qanūnē*, p. 165 ff.

strictly to the Nestorian creed and to the authority of Diodor, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorios<sup>27</sup>. This is all we know of his literary work<sup>28</sup>.

The portrait of the impact of the School of Nisibis still remains insufficient without reference to another area which also has received benefit from these stimuli. This involved the work in the mission fields. In fact, this center of learning in Nisibis instilled zeal for active propagation of the Christian faith.

The tradition has kept a memory of a number of such alumni laden with missionary fervor. The most celebrated speak for others whose names and efforts time has forgotten. In any case, they show what importance was ascribed to this area in this center of inspiration. Sabrišō' of Šiarzur, Bēt Garmai, after his studies went to Qardū where he devoted himself to the ascetic life<sup>29</sup>, returned to his home country, built his cell in the mountain of Ša'ran and the propagation of the Christian religion was set in motion. In the regions of Rādān, Belāšphar and Šiarzur where there were many pagans and nomadic tribes, he had much success<sup>30</sup>, so that the Magi became alarmed about it<sup>31</sup>. Appointment as bishop of Lāšōm did not change his interests — he carried on the missionary enterprise in his diocese<sup>32</sup>.

Grīgōr of Kaškar introduces a figure who embodies in himself the combination of teacher and missionary. He left his work teaching in Ḥadiab in order to do missionary work in his home-land. The second school he founded there was also used for evangelistic purposes<sup>33</sup>. It is said that his perseverance in this work was crowned

<sup>27</sup> Can. I, p. 167 f.

<sup>28</sup> He must not be confused with another Dadīšō' of Bēt Qatrāiē, as in CHABOT, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 56, whose name enjoys great reputation in the literary field.

<sup>29</sup> PETROS, *Taš'itā de-Mār Sabrišō'*, p. 294 f.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296 f.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299 f.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300 ff.

<sup>33</sup> وكان في كل سنة وقت الصوم يخرج الى القرى المجاورة له ليدعو الناس الى الايمان وياخذ معه المتعلمين بالصلوات. فان اطلق لهم القوم الدخول اليهم برّكهم وصلى عليهم وعرفهم الاعتقاد. وان منعوا

with success<sup>34</sup>. After his unhappy experiences on the bishop's seat of Nisibis<sup>35</sup>, we see him in his beloved missionary activities, evangelizing, baptizing, building the churches and appointing the clergy to carry out the pastoral work<sup>36</sup>.

In the light of these sources we can see that the School of Nisibis became a center which attracted all the influential persons who were destined to play an important rôle in the East Syrian society as instructors at the school, after having studied there, teachers in other places, founders of the new schools, missionaries, leaders of monastic communities and members of the hierarchy.

Thus, in every area of Christian life and action we see those men in the forefront who have received their illumination from the 'mother of learning' in Nisibis. On the basis of the observations just made we must conclude that the stimuli of this center of higher learning must have been very fruitful. They constituted an enrichment which must have had far-reaching effects. They have contributed towards the steady strengthening of the spirit. They have worked as incentives for deeper self-realization and have galvanized the latent forces engendering life in its creativeness. The stimuli set in motion permeated every dimension of life.

Thus the School of Nisibis brought enormous reputation to the town itself. It became respectfully regarded as 'the mother'<sup>37</sup>, 'the source of the science'<sup>38</sup>, the 'intellectual town'<sup>39</sup> and the 'mother of the towns'<sup>40</sup>.

اقام خارجًا عن القرية مع سائر من تبعه يصلى ويشرح امور النصرانية  
'and it happened that every year during طول النهار ويحتمل الضرب والرجم

the time of fasting he went out into the neighbouring villages in order to call the inhabitants to the faith, and he led with him those devoted to prayers; when they let him pass, he blessed them, prayed over them and taught them the faith; when they hindered him he stayed with his company outside the village, praying, explicating the Christian religion all the day enduring the blows and stones with patience', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 508.

<sup>34</sup> In the country of Maišan and Kaškar he destroyed many cult-objects and built chapels on the places dedicated to the idols, *ibid.*, p. 508.

<sup>35</sup> See page 305 f.

<sup>36</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 512.

<sup>37</sup> IŠŌ'DENAĦ, *Livre de la chasteté*, XV, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> MEŠĪHĀZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XIX, p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> PETROS, *Taš'itā de Mār Sabrišō'*, p. 291.

<sup>40</sup> *Statutes*, p. 105.



One figure, whose star shone brilliantly but was overshadowed by others in the School of Nisibis is Jōhannān. When we consider the part he played in the school <sup>1</sup>, it is strange that tradition has taken so little notice of him.

This source is no more satisfactory in reporting about Jōhannān's activities. The only positive information we gain from it is this, that Jōhannān's service to the school is bound up with the directorship of Abraham. In speaking of both, it says : 'These both, because they have drunk from the well of wisdom — on account of this, they were fit for the direction of this community'<sup>5</sup>. The rest is more platitude. These comments do not explain what is meant by his great endeavors for the welfare of the institution<sup>6</sup>. The hint that he is to be credited with the establishment of good order in the school is much too vague<sup>7</sup> to be given any great weight. One reference indicates that he made a trip to the court 'because

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 388<sup>7-8</sup>.

of an affair of the school'<sup>8</sup>. In what capacity or connection he fulfilled this function — we are left in ignorance.

The circumstances that involved Jōhannān in the administration of the school hang together with the conditions under which Abraham had to carry out his responsibilities. As we have seen previously<sup>9</sup>, the atmosphere was so polluted with explosive stuff that almost anything was to be expected to upset Abraham's administration.

Greater precision about this state of affairs is most difficult. Barḥadbešabbā contends that Abraham was able to carry out his responsibilities for nearly twenty years before the explosion. By that time, the web of intrigue had been strongly woven. Even the students were made satellites of circles in the community. Coordinated effort so consistently directed against Abraham's administration led to his dismissal<sup>10</sup>. As we have said earlier, Barḥadbešabbā claims that Eliša<sup>a</sup> took over the reins of leadership for a period of four years<sup>11</sup>.

One thing is clear — Abraham in his administration of the school was constantly subject to attack and accusation. This is an historical fact. Tradition would not have concocted such a brew of poison against the memory of such a celebrated director.

But it is another matter when we come to the question concerning how much of this presentation of affairs which brought about the discharge and temporary removal of Abraham is to be accepted. To answer this question requires a stronger witness than Barḥadbešabbā. The Chronicle of Arbēl stands closer to the actual happenings. It argues that one result of the heated controversy was this, that Jōhannān was engaged as an aide de camp of Abraham in the administration of the school<sup>12</sup>. We have reason to believe that this is the safer course for us to follow. We shall return to these stones of stumbling again<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> ܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܬ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܬ, *ibid.*, p. 388<sub>11</sub>.

<sup>9</sup> See page 149 ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 620.

<sup>11</sup> See page 129 f.

<sup>12</sup> See page 149.

<sup>13</sup> See page 217 ff.

## 2. JŌḤANNĀN'S LITERARY WORK

The School of Nisibis found, in the person of Jōḥannān, a fruitful author of many interests who managed to nurture the culture of literary creation in this center of learning while deeply enmeshed in his position as aide of Abraham.

His most important contribution is in the field of biblical exegesis. While Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥowān speaks but cursorily of this man's production of commentaries<sup>1</sup>, other sources are not so abrupt. The Chronicle of Seert devotes some words to his commentaries on the Pentateuch<sup>2</sup>. 'Abdīšō' enumerates the commentaries on Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers from among those in the Pentateuch<sup>3</sup>.

As to the section on the Ketubim, our witnesses register two commentaries. One is on the book of Job<sup>4</sup>. This is best attested. Another is that on the book of Proverbs<sup>5</sup>. Of the prophetic books, our only witness, 'Abdīšō', lists commentaries on Jeremiah and Ezekiel<sup>6</sup>.

This brings us to another phase of his activities in the field of biblical studies. Jōḥannān wrote works other than commentaries in this area. Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān had these in mind when making the summary statement: 'Commentaries and traditions of the Scriptures'<sup>7</sup>. The Chronicle of Seert characterises these as 'Questions'<sup>8</sup>. One of these works is more fully described as a volume of the questions on the Old and the New Testament<sup>9</sup>. This is the only ray of light given us in regard to his work on the New Testament. The sources are otherwise silent upon the matter.

Jōḥannān's entire heritage in biblical exegesis, which once captured the lime-light in its vital contribution to East Syrian exegetical traditions, has become a victim of destruction. This loss is

<sup>1</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 388<sub>8-9</sub>.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sub>4</sub>.

<sup>3</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sub>4</sub>.

<sup>5</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> ܠܟܬܒܐ ܕܟܬܘܒܐ ܕܟܬܘܒܐ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 388<sub>8-9</sub>.

<sup>8</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sub>3-4</sub>.

<sup>9</sup> ܠܟܬܒܐ ܕܟܬܘܒܐ ܕܟܬܘܒܐ ܕܟܬܘܒܐ ܕܟܬܘܒܐ ܕܟܬܘܒܐ 'and he has a book of the questions of the Old and New (Testament)', *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 72.

great. The little we have survives in quotations which found a place of refuge in eclectic exegetical works. Some samples of his exegetical method in the Old Testament are embedded in the works of ʾĪṣō'dād of Hedatā, namely in his commentaries on Genesis<sup>10</sup>, Exodus<sup>11</sup>, Leviticus<sup>12</sup>, Numbers<sup>13</sup>, Deuteronomy<sup>14</sup>, Joshua<sup>15</sup>, Judges<sup>16</sup> and Ezekiel<sup>17</sup>. An anonymous work has preserved new splinters in the commentaries on Genesis<sup>18</sup>, Exodus<sup>19</sup>, Leviticus<sup>20</sup>, Numbers<sup>21</sup>, Deuteronomy<sup>22</sup> and on Ezekiel<sup>23</sup>. Interesting shreds emerge in an anonymous commentary on the Psalms<sup>24</sup>. Some were quoted in the work of Ishāq Šebadnāi<sup>25</sup>. Some remains can be traced also in the *Gannat būssāmē*<sup>26</sup>. Exponents of Jōhannān's exegetical, as well as other hermeneutical studies known under the title 'Questions', appear in connection with other authorities, repeated in the repertoires of the traditions of the East Syrian exegesis<sup>27</sup>.

In comparison with these vestiges almost nothing has survived of the remnants of his work in the New Testament<sup>28</sup>.

The data in these literary sources do not aspire to completeness. Our witnesses are not in a position to tell us much about his work

<sup>10</sup> An explanation, *Commentaire*, I : *Genèse*, p. 204, can be identified through the help of Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 23b where it is fully quoted from the work of Jōhannān.

<sup>11</sup> *Commentaire*, II, p. 30, 48.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87 quoted under the name of Jōhannān.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117, 118 et passim, quoted under the name of Jōhannan.

<sup>15</sup> Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. syr. 10, fol. 160a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 4524, fol. 111b.

<sup>16</sup> Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. syr. 10, fol. 161b, 162b, 165ab; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 4524, fol. 112b, 113b, 115b, 116a.

<sup>17</sup> Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. syr. 10, fol. 309a; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 4524, fol. 259a.

<sup>18</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 23b.

<sup>19</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 41b, 48a.

<sup>20</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 60a, 61b, 66a, 68a, 73b.

<sup>21</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 75a, 79a, 80b, 81b, 83b et passim.

<sup>22</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 99b, 101b, 103b, 106a, 110a.

<sup>23</sup> Ms. Bagd. 113, fol. 394a; cf. Ms. Vat. syr. 578, fol. 205b.

<sup>24</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 58, fol. 17b-176b.

<sup>25</sup> Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 10, fol. 8b.

<sup>26</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 43, fol. 10a; Ms. Manch. Ryl. 41, fol. 90a.

<sup>27</sup> See footnotes 31-33.

<sup>28</sup> One vestige appears in the commentary of ʾĪṣō'dād on the gospels, *Commentaries*, III, p. 133.

in the New Testament area. Vestiges of this work appear in the exegetical writings of Īšō'dād of Merv on the Gospels<sup>29</sup> and the Pauline Epistles<sup>30</sup>. We can be certain that they are blended into that stratum of exegetical tradition variously named 'the whole school of Bēt Rabban'<sup>31</sup>, 'the traditions of the school, that is, the illustrious doctors'<sup>32</sup>, and 'the traditions of the ancient doctors'<sup>33</sup>, since Ḥenānā, another luminary in these traditions, is usually quoted under his name.

That is as far as we can go at the moment. Until new manuscript discoveries are made to rescue us from this situation, this important phase in the origins and élan of East Syrian biblical exegesis will remain hidden from our eyes.

The genre of polemical and apologetic literature also has been enriched by Jōḥannān. His best attested work in this area is his treatise against the Jews<sup>34</sup>. Next in order would be a work against the doctrines of Mazdaism<sup>35</sup>. Barḥadbešabbā lists a work against Eutyches<sup>36</sup>, which was patently directed against the Monophysite positions<sup>37</sup>. It is not clear whether this work is synonymous with that entitled 'Against the Heretics'<sup>38</sup> in 'Abdīšō'.

What Jōḥannān did in the field of theology, besides the polemical and apologetic studies, is unknown. The only exponent of his theological thinking and expression which has survived exists in a doctrinal statement entitled: 'A Confession of Faith of Jōḥannān of Bēt Rabban'<sup>39</sup>, which is a declaration of Nestorian convictions.

<sup>29</sup> *Commentaries*, III, p. 133; cf. also Ms. Šarf. Patr. 308.

<sup>30</sup> *Commentaries*, V, 1, p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> ܡܬܪܬܡܐ ܕܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 12, fol. 10a.

<sup>32</sup> ܡܬܪܬܡܐ ܕܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ . ܡܬܪܬܡܐ ܕܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ĪŠŌ'DĀD, *Commentaries*, V, 1, p. 107.

<sup>33</sup> ܡܬܪܬܡܐ ܕܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 11, fol. 6a.

<sup>34</sup> BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 388<sup>9</sup>; 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 72; *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sup>4-5</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> ܡܬܪܬܡܐ ܕܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ 'and against the Magi', 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 72; *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> The Syriac text reads ܡܬܪܬܡܐ which most probably is the name of the champion of the Monophysite cause.

<sup>37</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 388<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> ܡܬܪܬܡܐ ܕܠܗܘܬܐ Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 11, fol. 6a. *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 72.

<sup>39</sup> ܡܬܪܬܡܐ ܕܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ 'the faith of the holy church (formulated) by Jōḥannān of Bēt Rabban', Ms. Borg. syr. 78, fol. 47a-48b.

The existence of this is an echo of the doctrinal controversies that filled the air under Abraham of Bēt Rabban <sup>40</sup>.

Judging from the titles, Jōhannān has fostered creativity on historical themes. One is reported to have dealt with Khosrau's victory over the Arabs of Neḡran <sup>41</sup>. Another was written about the catastrophe of the great pestilence <sup>42</sup>. A treatise about the death of Khosrau <sup>43</sup> must have erroneously found its way into the categorization of his writings. In any case, it had not seen the light of day during Jōhannān's lifetime since Khosrau died in 578 A.D. It is quite possible that, in some way, we have here to do with a confusion with the previously mentioned work.

In the area of the liturgical and the cultic, his most popular work was in his *bā'wātā*, 'supplications' <sup>44</sup>. Very little of it has survived <sup>45</sup>. Another type of devotional material with which he was concerned is characterized as funeral supplications <sup>46</sup>, and the *būiā'ē* <sup>47</sup>. The *tūrgāmē* were associated with these <sup>48</sup>. Nothing has come down to us of this genre.

His gifts also found expression in poetry. A cycle of the *madrāšē* was known to 'Abdišō' <sup>49</sup>. He also had knowledge of the *qalē* <sup>50</sup> and reserved a special place for this genre <sup>51</sup>. We have only one sample of his poetical taste and religious lyric. It is found in a *tešbūḥtā* that has made its way into a liturgical manual <sup>52</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> See page 153 ff.

<sup>41</sup> ܠܗ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ 'one (treatise) how Khosrau conquered Neḡran', *Fondation des écoles*, p. 388.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 388; 'ABDIŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 72.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72; *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sub>5-6</sub>.

<sup>44</sup> ܠܗ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ 'ABDIŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 72. These are described as ܡܡܪܐ ܕܠܝܐܥܘܬ ܕܡܡܪܐ 'the *mēmre* about the *bā'wātā*', *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>45</sup> Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. syr. 7, fol. 92b; Ms. Berl. orient. quart. 803, fol. 118b, 119a.

<sup>46</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116.

<sup>47</sup> ܠܗ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ 'and the *būiā'ē* about every order', 'ABDIŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 72.

<sup>48</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 116<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>49</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LVI, p. 73.

<sup>50</sup> ܡܠܝܟ is a term for chants in which the strophe was prefixed with a versicle.

<sup>51</sup> ܠܗ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ ܕܚܕܐ 'and he composed the *qalē* of the 'ūniātā', *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>52</sup> *Breviarium chaldaicum*, p. 28 f.

## 3. HISTORICAL PROBLEMS

The first will not hold us long. It concerns the validity of the claim which places Jōḥannān after the directorship of Abraham and thus makes him the successor. Sūrīn gives us this portrayal<sup>1</sup>. Mari follows in his steps<sup>2</sup>. Since modern scholars have granted this presentation support, we cannot afford to ignore it. Both Labourt<sup>3</sup> and Chabot<sup>4</sup> find this sequence trustworthy. Leclercq<sup>5</sup> also makes his choice in the same way.

But it is not difficult to resolve this sequence — and that with a measure of certainty. The roots of this sequence are shallow — not deeper than the latest strata of the traditions. But the earliest witness in the Chronicle of Arbēl<sup>6</sup> together with the tradition embedded in the School of Nisibis, as seen in the work of Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān<sup>7</sup>, form a two-stranded knot that cannot be broken by this rival. The sources introducing the Abraham-Jōḥannān sequence were not acquainted with the actual happenings.

Other problems await us not even providing us with a pause. We have promised to return to the stones of stumbling. The intricate question regarding the extent to which the opposition forces succeeded — whether Abraham was ousted for a period or whether a compromise was effected under which Abraham had to share his administration with an assistant — is before us.

While focusing up our antenna in the search of clues to determine of our course, let us make some observations to put us upon a solid footing.

First of all, what is the value of the tradition as presented by Barḥadbešabbā, namely, that Abraham's adversaries realized their ambition of deposing Abraham? A serious complication arises in the omission of any mention of Jōḥannān of Bēt Rabban. This

<sup>1</sup> *Mēmra de-abāhātā*, p. 400<sub>1-3</sub>.

<sup>2</sup> *وَجَلَسَ بَعْدَهُ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ اِبْنُ اَخْتِهِ وَبَعْدَهُ يُوْحَنَّا* 'after him, Abraham,

a son of his sister, occupied (the office), and after him Jōḥannān', *De patriarchis*, p. 45<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>3</sup> *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 292.

<sup>4</sup> *École de Nisibe*, p. 57 f.; *Littérature syriaque*, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> *École de Nisibe*, col. 1381.

<sup>6</sup> See page 149, 212.

<sup>7</sup> See page 131 f.



there<sup>13</sup> came from this saint'<sup>14</sup>. This strained<sup>15</sup> statement suggests that such order as was restored in the school must be credited to Jōhannān.

Finally, it should not be ignored that the tradition that Abraham and Jōhannān belong together, in sharing the leadership of the School of Nisibis, appears also in *Īšō'denah*<sup>16</sup>.

Taking cognizance of all these factors, to the extent that they are ascertainable, the only reliable tradition seems to be that which speaks of the assignment of Jōhannān to Abraham as an assistant — perhaps more accurately as co-administrator.

#### 4. CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

But two references have to do with chronological observations. If these can be elucidated, it should be possible to throw the chronological framework of Jōhannān's life into relief. But peril lurks in the wings.

The first reference appears in connection with the writing of Jōhannān about Khosrau's conquest of Neğran. The circumstances which induced him to compose this work are described in the following way : 'Because he was at that time there at the court for the affairs of the school'<sup>1</sup>. Nothing is said about the reasons that had brought Jōhanān to the royal residence. Hermann postulates that this trip may have been related to the suspension of the school<sup>2</sup> which even, as we have seen, took place in 540/1-542 A.D.<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> The reference is to the school.

<sup>14</sup> *Ḥayim ḥayim ha-ẓadik k'ha-ẓadik*, *amsh*: *Nitz ṭanhal* u.v. *ḥayim*.  
Fondation des écoles, p. 3887-8.

<sup>15</sup> It is remarkable that in this connection Barḥadbešabbā uses *ܐܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ* which also can be rendered 'and if it is right to tell the truth' or 'if it is allowed to tell the truth'.

<sup>16</sup> *Livre de la chasteté*, XIV, p. 7.

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 388<sub>10 11</sub>.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ob wir im Zusammenhang hiermit die Reise des Jōhannān de Bēth Rabban an den Königshof nennen dürfen', *Schule von Nisibis*, p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> See page 155 f.

The historical documents let us down — they are of no help dating this episode.

The second reference involves an event no less important than the date of Jōhannān's death. Tradition associates this with calamity which befell not only Persia but other countries as well. 'For he fell asleep through the great pestilence'<sup>4</sup>. We cannot determine whether the traditions embedded in the Chronicle Seert<sup>5</sup> and Mari<sup>6</sup> are independent of each other or whether both rest upon a single source.

A lengthy description of this calamity is given in the Chronicle. It paints a portrait of horror<sup>7</sup>. The events are placed in the period of Catholicos Jāusep. According to this source, the 'great plague began during the tenth year of his rule<sup>8</sup>. This leads us to the year 561/62 A.D. It lasted three and one half years<sup>9</sup>. On this basis, the death of Jōhannān would fall between the years 561, and 564 A.D.

The story is quite different in other sources. They say that the plague lasted a much longer time. It was still rampant in the day of the Catholicos Ḥazqī'el. It is reported<sup>10</sup> that the pestilence recurred also under his rule<sup>11</sup> which event is particularly well known, since — in this connection — a special provision was made in the liturgical practice in order to commemorate this sad event<sup>12</sup>. Using this information, Baumstark arrived at the year 566/7 A.D. as the date of Jōhannān's death<sup>13</sup>. Ortiz de Urbina agrees<sup>14</sup>. This

<sup>4</sup> ܐܡܪ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ *Fondation des écoles*, p. 389.

<sup>5</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 185.

<sup>6</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 182 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>10</sup> *AMB, De patriarchis*, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> He ruled from 569-70 to 580.

<sup>12</sup> In order to bring an end to this calamity, the metropolitan of Bēt Garmai and the bishop of Nisibis instituted special days of repentance, *ibid.*, p. 43 f. After the disappearance of the pestilence, an annual commemoration called the 'Fast of Ninive', was introduced. It lasted for 3 days and was held in the third week before the Quadragesima fast. The Jacobite tradition also adopted this practice.

<sup>13</sup> *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 116.

<sup>14</sup> *Patrologia syriaca*, p. 115.

an attempt to respect the divergent tradition<sup>15</sup> though an older source protests against it<sup>16</sup>.

However, the situation is still more confused. For there is a chorus of witnesses demanding an earlier date for the great plague. Jōḥannān of Ephesus dates the beginning of the calamity in the year 544 A.D.<sup>17</sup>. A lengthy report is recorded in Mika'el<sup>18</sup> and in an anonymous chronicle<sup>19</sup>. The same tradition appears in Euagrios<sup>20</sup>. The length of the scourge is given as four years<sup>21</sup>. Still other sources claim that the scourge began as early as 535 A.D.<sup>22</sup>. An anonymous chronicle places it in the year 546 A.D.<sup>23</sup>.

In view of this constellation in the sources, one could surmise that the Chronicle of Seert has confused data, borrowed from various sources, and that the reference to the beginning of the pestilence in the second year of 'his rule'<sup>24</sup> therefore fails to mention whether this applies to Justinianus or to Khosrau. This explanation is also quite natural on linguistic grounds<sup>25</sup>. If the application is made in favor of the former person, the Chronicle supports the earliest date; if to the latter, it supports a date near that of Jōḥannān of Ephesus.

Matters become more complicated when we notice what seems to be a misplacement of the narratives told by Jōḥannān of Ephesus

<sup>15</sup> 'Mit dem Tode J. an das untere Ende der damit gegebenen Zeitgrenze heranzurücken, lässt die Tatsache als ratsam erscheinen, dass die Epidemie noch unter K. Ezechiel (569-70 - 580-1) fortgedauert hat', *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 116 footnote 1.

<sup>16</sup> مستقيمة وكانت الامور في هذه الايام 'at this time affairs were well',

*Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 195.

<sup>17</sup> *Fragmenta*, p. 304 f.

<sup>18</sup> *Chronique*, IV, p. 305 f.

<sup>19</sup> *Chronicon ad ann.* 1234, I, p. 197 f.

<sup>20</sup> *Historia eccl.*, IV, 29, p. 123.

<sup>21</sup> However Euagrios claims that the pestilence lasted for 52 years.

<sup>22</sup> PROCOPIUS, *De bello persico*, II, 22, p. 453 ff.; AGATHIAS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historiarum libri*, V, 1, col. 1558.

<sup>23</sup> *Chronicon ad ann.* 1234, I, p. 197, but this must be a mistake, since the synchronism is out of order; the 16th year of the rule of Justinianus is 543-44.

<sup>24</sup> وفي السنة العاشرة من ملكه 'and in the tenth year of his kingdom',

*Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 182.

<sup>25</sup> The word ملكه, although it does also mean 'rule', would be strange in connection with the rule of a catholicos.

into the period of the Catholicos Jāusep<sup>26</sup>. But what seems to be obvious appears less so upon closer scrutiny. The Chronicle of Seert is here quoting a new voice from whom we have not heard before. It is a quotation from an historical work written by Bar Saḥdē, a work originating in the pre-Islamic period. As soon as we hear this man's name, and see a fragment of his lost work we become attentive, for this author from Karkā de-Bēt Selōk must have stood closer to the events in question. The Chronicle makes the following statement: 'Bar Saḥdē, who composed a chronicle, says that Jāusep, called the catholicos, devoted himself to the burial of the dead ones, thrown on the ground and on the roads, and that one does not know any other merit (that belongs) to him'<sup>27</sup>. If this be so, then we have to reckon with the fact that the epidemic must have taken place during the rule of Catholicos Jāusep.

Our results though meager are as follows: Jōḥannān most probably was a victim of a pestilence at the time of Catholicos Jāusep. But that this was the 'great plague' can hardly be considered correct. We must also admit that the memory of his having died during the time of the great plague, which occurred between the years 544 and 547 A.D., thus placing his demise at this earlier date, could be correct. The third possibility that takes the plague in the reign of Catholicos Ḥazqī'el into account, has no solid basis.

<sup>26</sup> Compare the section in *Historia eccl.*, with the narratives in *Histoire nestorienne*, VII

<sup>27</sup> قول بر سهدى الذى جمع الاخبار ان يوسف الملقب بالجائليق صرف  
حيه الى دفن الموتى المطروحين فى الارض والطرق ولا يعرف له جميل  
غيره *ibid.*, p. 185<sub>10</sub>-186<sub>2</sub>.

# THE INTERIM PERIOD OF ʾĪṣō'IAHB AND ABRAHAM

## 1. ʾĪṣō'IAHB'S BACKGROUND

ʾĪṣō'iahb was of Bēt 'Arbāiē<sup>1</sup>, the region between Bālād and Nisibis. He was an alumnus of the School of Nisibis where he had studied under Abraham<sup>2</sup>. He was destined to become the successor of his teacher when the master died. The claim that the successor of Abraham was ʾĪṣō'iahb of Gedālā<sup>3</sup> is a mistake.

It is also a mistake to regard Jāusep Hūzāiā as the successor of Abraham and Jōḥannān, as this appears in Mari<sup>4</sup> and also in some modern authors who have trusted his guidance<sup>5</sup>. The same Jāusep has erroneously been made Narsai's successor<sup>6</sup>.

The exact time of his appointment and promotion is not known. Our calculations must all depend upon the date of Abraham's death. This seems to have taken place in the second part of the seventh decade, somewhere between 565 A.D. and 568 A.D.

ʾĪṣō'iahb is celebrated in the tradition as a man of deep learning<sup>7</sup>, as both skilful and experienced. All the sources accord him this respect. The period of his directorship is marked by a spirit of ability and diligence<sup>8</sup>.

The length of office is quite brief when compared to that of other directors of the school. It lasted no longer than two years<sup>9</sup>. While the Chronicle of Seert does not provide us with a full picture,

<sup>1</sup> BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 389<sub>12</sub>; *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 438.

<sup>2</sup> MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> IBN AṬ-ṬAIYIB, *Fiqh an-naṣrānīya*, II, p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> DUVAL, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 70, 348 f.; CHABOT, *École de Nisibe*, p. 58; CHABOT, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 55; SEGAL, *Diacritical Point*, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup> BAR 'EBRĀIĀ, *Chronicon eccl*, III, col. 77.

<sup>7</sup> *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 16,

<sup>8</sup> SŪRĪN, *Mēmra de-abāhātā*, p. 400<sub>12-13</sub>.

<sup>9</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 390.

it does say that Īšō'iahb left the office by resignation when elected to the bishopric of Arzūn<sup>10</sup>. Barhadbešabbā of Ḥolwān adds a bit to our information when he says: 'He worked in it manfully for two years, and then he became tired of it, and he went and became bishop of Arzūn'<sup>11</sup>.

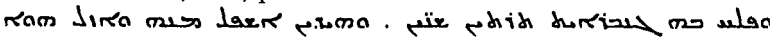
Our sources nowhere record any reason for this 'tiredness'. From what we know of the situation at the time, external reasons are ruled out. It was an epoch marked by most favorable conditions. Khosrau had, in his peace treaty with the Emperor Justinianus in the year 563 A.D., given assurance that there would be freedom of religion in his empire, including permission for the erection of buildings designed for the purposes of the cult<sup>12</sup>. His attitude toward the Christians is embedded in the eulogies recorded in the acts of the synod held in 576 A.D. under Catholicos Ḥazqi'el. The acts in turn speak of Khosrau as a benefactor who is generous and merciful to whom best wishes for a prolonged rule and life are extended<sup>13</sup>. Thus, it must have been difficulties of an intrinsic kind within the school which moved Īšō'iahb's thoughts toward resignation.

## 2. ĪŠŌ'IAHB'S LITERARY CREATION

The first work we would mention is that recorded in the Chronicle of Seert as follows: 'He explicated the mysteries in epitome'<sup>1</sup>. 'Amr gives us a slightly different form of the title<sup>2</sup>.


We are most fortunate in possessing some information about this work. The author himself, in a letter to Bishop Ja'qōb, mentions his work saying that it was a commentary on the liturgy of baptism and of the Eucharist. He goes on to state that it was a composition


<sup>10</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 438.

<sup>11</sup>  *Fondation des écoles*, p. 389<sub>12</sub>-390<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>12</sup> MENANDER, *Fragmenta historici*, II, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 110<sub>6-7</sub>.

<sup>1</sup>  *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 439<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>2</sup>  'and he explicated the liturgy and the mysteries in epitome', *De patriarchis*, p. 49<sub>3</sub>.

consisting of the text to which he added commentary : 'We have written lucidly and distinctly about that how it is right for a priest to approach absolving baptism and the presentation of the divine sacrifice in the service, terrible and priestly, that is when reconciling God and absolving the baptized ones; we added to every sentence its exposition in many short (comments)' <sup>3</sup>. The genesis of this work, which indicates by inference the relation between the instruction and the literary creativity, is described by him as follows : 'We wish that also this be known to you that as we were in the great school at the peak <sup>4</sup> of research, we have written it at the request of the fathers, bishops and eminent brothers' <sup>5</sup>.

No trace of this work remains. Assemani's supposition <sup>6</sup>, repeated by Braun <sup>7</sup> and Baumstark <sup>8</sup>, namely, that a fragment had survived, is wrong.

Another commentary is a theological and historical treatment of the trishagion<sup>9</sup>. This too was written by request — by Abraham, bishop of Dair Gazartā. It bears the title: 'the Cause of the Trishagion of God'<sup>10</sup>. The only copy that has come down to us is incomplete<sup>11</sup>.

Another field which has come under his cultivation is that of theology. His writings show divided interest between polemical and confessional theology. A work entitled 'Against Eunomios' is reported by 'Abdišo'<sup>12</sup>. A disputation with an heretical bishop<sup>13</sup>,

[illegible]

<sup>4</sup> κζκζ, ἀκμή.

[illegible]

<sup>6</sup> *Bibliotheca orientalis*, III, 1, p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> *Buch der Synhados*, p. 239, footnote 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 126, footnote 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 561, fol. 152a-156b.

<sup>10</sup> כחלק מרעיון זה

<sup>11</sup> *Trattato di Yešō'yabh*, p. 687-715.

<sup>12</sup> *అమలక* *అమల*, *Catalogus librorum*, LXXII, p. 108.

<sup>13</sup> כתיב דב קאלימ קאמער זינ לכולו 'and he held a disputation against a heretical bishop', *ibid.*, p. 109.

beneath which description we detect a refutation of Monophysite doctrine, is also mentioned. Neither is extant.

Of his theological thinking and formulation, we have an exposé in the form of a longer creed bearing the title : 'The Symbol of the Right Faith of the Catholic Church' to which a proem is prefixed <sup>14</sup>. This 'Confession Composed by Īšō'iahb' <sup>15</sup> is an expansion of the Nicaenum. It includes, in addition to the positive doctrines of the Nestorian tenets, the refutation of Marcion, Sabellios, Paul of Samosata, Eutychios, Apollinarios, Photios and Severos. A number of formulations which appear in the acts of the synod held in 553 A.D. under Justinianus <sup>16</sup> have their repercussions here.

Another confession of faith, no longer extant in Syriac, but available in an Arabic version <sup>17</sup>, is reported to have been a doctrinal statement prepared by Īšō'iahb for presentation to the Emperor Mauricius <sup>18</sup>. This may be the document referred to by 'Abdīšō' under the title 'Defence' or 'Apology' <sup>19</sup>.

Īšō'iahb enriched the field of canon law by his contribution. This material of a legislative character belongs to the later period of his life when he was an administrator of the church. He provided a cycle of canons for adoption by the synod held in the year 585 A.D. in Seleucia-Ctesiphon <sup>20</sup>. Another cycle of canons was prepared and sent to Ja'qōb, a bishop <sup>21</sup>, which is of particular importance with respect to the history of the liturgy <sup>22</sup>.

Still another cycle, which is of a different category, belongs to the genre of the šū'ālē. 'Abdīšō' has included this legislative material in his list under the title : 'The Twenty-two šū'ālē about the Ecclesiastical Mysteries' <sup>23</sup>. This is a different cycle and cannot

<sup>14</sup> ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ *Synodicon orientale*, p. 182-196.

<sup>15</sup> ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ *ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>16</sup> *Conciliorum oec. collectio*, IX, p. 230 ff.

<sup>17</sup> 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 26.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ, *Catalogus librorum*, LXXII, p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 130 f., 132 ff.

<sup>21</sup> *Lettre*, p. 168-190.

<sup>22</sup> See VÖÖBUS, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen*, II.

<sup>23</sup> ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܬܐ, *Catalogus librorum*, LXXII p. 110 f.

be confused with those mentioned <sup>24</sup>. It also cannot be confused with the commentary on the liturgy <sup>25</sup>. Of this cycle only a fragment has survived <sup>26</sup>.

The corpus of his letters, listed in 'Abdīšō' <sup>27</sup> and 'Amr' <sup>28</sup>, is lost, except for the one sent to Ja'qōb, bishop of Darain <sup>29</sup>, a town on the main island of Bahrain <sup>30</sup>.

It is said that Īšō'iahb also placed his talents in the service of cultic practice. Of his contribution here, only the *tūrgāmē* <sup>31</sup> are conspicuous, it being impossible to describe the other writings more accurately even as to the purpose they were to serve <sup>32</sup>.

### 3. ĪŠŌ'IAHB'S FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

Īšō'iahb's occupancy of the bishop's seat of Arzūn did not exceed a maximum of ten years. He was to be elected to the pontificate, the elevation which he owed to Hormizd IV <sup>1</sup>. As it happened, the electorate upon the death of Catholicos Ḥazqī'ēl came up with a tie vote between Īšō'iahb and a man named Job who was a teacher in the School of Seleucia <sup>2</sup> and a relative of Narsai. Faced with the stalemate, Hormizd decided in favor of Īšō'iahb <sup>3</sup>. The tradition purports

<sup>24</sup> The cycle sent to Ja'qōb comprises 20 canons. Assurance of the fact that this is the correct number and that none of these canons have been lost, is Īšō'iahb's own witness, included in the same letter, stating expressly that he prepared this cycle of 20 canons, *Lettre*, p. 191.

<sup>25</sup> BRAUN, *Buch der Synhados*, p. 191 and p. 239, footnote 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 150, fol. 93a-94b. See also VÖÖBUS, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, II.

<sup>27</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LXXII, p. 111.

<sup>28</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 49<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> *Lettre*, p. 165 ff.

<sup>30</sup> Dārīn, in YAQUT, *Mu'ğam al-buldān*, II, p. 537.

<sup>31</sup> وكتاب التراجم 'and the writings of the *tūrgāmē*', *ibid.*, 49<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> وعمل كتابًا روايات المزامير 'and he composed writings in the traditions of the Psalms', 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 49<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>1</sup> He ruled from February, 579 to summer, 590.

<sup>2</sup> لمفسر 'commentator', 'exégète', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 438<sub>6</sub>.

<sup>3</sup> It is reported that when he was bishop of Arzūn he had furnished Hormizd with information regarding the movements of the military forces beyond the Persian boundaries, *ibid.*, p. 438, 442.

to know the reason for Hormizd's selection, no less than his motivation.

The exact date of Īšō'iahb's elevation is encumbered by certain chronological difficulties. One tradition argues for the years 580/1 A.D.<sup>4</sup>, another, for the date 582/3 A.D.<sup>5</sup>.

Hormizd IV respected Īšō'iahb. He demonstrated this by his extraordinary sympathy towards the Christians<sup>6</sup>. Something of this we see reflected in the synodical acts<sup>7</sup> and also in his answer to the Iranian clergy<sup>8</sup>. Such an attitude created an atmosphere that facilitated Īšō'iahb's endeavors and efforts on behalf of the church. We are told that he reaped a rich harvest — the erection of monasteries and schools<sup>9</sup> some of which are named in the tradition<sup>10</sup>.

Īšō'iahb gained the respect of the ruler of the Arabs, Nu'mān<sup>11</sup> who was converted to the Christian faith together with his sons, Mundir and Hasan and his sister, Hind<sup>12</sup>. As a result, the Christian influence extended to the Arab tribes and there produced new centres of cultic and ascetic life.

But the thunder was already rolling in the distance. And it was coming from a quarter that could not have been predicted in

<sup>4</sup> Namely, the first year of the rule of Hormizd (579) and the year 892 A.G., i.e. 581, 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 44 f.

<sup>5</sup> According to the synchronism on the 4th year of the rule of Hormizd, ELIĀ BAR ŠINĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> What might be thought of his positive action is discernible in the following statement: *وكتب الى عماله بان يرجعوا الى راي الاساقفة في الاحكام وفي سائر الامور ولا يعملوا شيئاً الا بمشورتهم* 'he even wrote to the

governors that they should act according to the views of the bishops in matters of justice and in other (similar) affairs, and do nothing that is not in accordance with their advice', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 4391-2.

It is instructive to add that Bal'amī eulogizes his actions and claims that his justice surpassed that of Anōširvan, *Chronique*, II, p. 246. Also Hišām ibn Muḥammad, see ṬABARĪ, *Ta'riḥ ar-rusul*, p. 988.

<sup>7</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 130.

<sup>8</sup> His reply to the Magi reveals his patent sympathy for the Christians, as this is demonstrated by a reliable tradition, see ṬABARĪ, *Ta'riḥ ar-rusul*, p. 990 f.

<sup>9</sup> MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 563-4.

<sup>10</sup> 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Nu'mān III ben Mundir Abū Qābūs.

<sup>12</sup> Converted by Šem'ōn of Ḥirtā, Sabrišō' of Lāšōm and the Monk Īšō'zekā, Īšō'DENAḤ, *Livre de la chasteté*, XLVII, p. 29. Cf. 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 47 ff., cf. MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 56.

advance — namely from the School of Nisibis. For Ḥenānā, its director, spurred on by his theological convictions, had begun to divide minds and to excite highly explosive material to an incendiary level. Some explosions must already have been felt at the important synod in 585 A.D. in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Among the decisions threatening certain prelates with suspension except they come to the catholicos in repentance, accepting the decisions of the synod, one is most instructive in this respect<sup>13</sup>. While the other metropolitans may have had other motives<sup>14</sup>, Šemʿōn, metropolitan of Nisibis, ignored the summons advising his bishops to do the same certainly because he sided with Ḥenānā<sup>15</sup>.

Certain actions taken by Īšō'iahb in his high office had a direct bearing upon the fate of the School of Nisibis. Documentary evidence speaks of the most important of these. Among the canons of the synod, there is one that offers an affirmation of the authority of Theodore of Mopsuestia. It is a long section<sup>16</sup> entitled : 'An apology of the writings and the tradition of the holy Theodore, and a refutation of the heretics who have spread false rumors about him'<sup>17</sup>. Not only was this action long overdue as an answer of Nestorian Christianity to the decisions of the council of the year 553 A.D. which had condemned all his works<sup>18</sup>, but it was also prompted by immediate necessity which had become worrisome.

[illegible]

<sup>14</sup> Metropolitan Grigor does not appear in all the manuscripts. His absence may have been motivated by the separatistic tendencies that have been cherished in the bishoprics in 'Elam and Phars.

<sup>15</sup> See page 303 f.

<sup>16</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 136-138.

[illegible]

<sup>18</sup> *Conciliorum oec. collectio*, IX, col. 646.

It is quite clear that this was aimed at the director of the School at Nisibis, Ḥenānā. This assertion therefore has its significance in regard to the future happenings in which the director and the school were involved <sup>19</sup>.

When the throne exchanged hands, it had the effect of cooling off the ecclesiastical climate. It had been the case under Khosrau II that, due to certain difficulties and complications <sup>20</sup>, Ṭšō'iahb had not only lost favor <sup>21</sup> but actually found himself under a threat <sup>22</sup>. The fact that the Jacobite party, protected under the mantle of its protegee, Queen Šīrīn, and aided and abetted by the physicians Timotheos of Nisibis <sup>23</sup> and Gabri'el of Šīggar <sup>24</sup> in particular, steadily kept winning influence at court, did nothing to make things easier. The additional headaches caused by the situation in the School of Nisibis added weight to the cross under which he was already suffering.

Laden with care, accompanied by the approaching thunder clouds, he began his journey to see the newly converted Nu'mān of Ḥirtā only to have death settle all his worry. He was laid to rest in a monastery but recently founded by Hind <sup>25</sup> after whom it was named <sup>26</sup>. The church history of Mikā, employed by Eliiā bar Šīnaiā, records his death in the year 594/5 A.D. <sup>27</sup> while 'Amr gives the date as 595/6 A.D. <sup>28</sup>.

#### 4. ABRAHAM'S PERSON AND BACKGROUND

According to our earliest source in Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān, the directorship upon the resignation of Ṭšō'iahb went into the hands of another Abraham <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> See page 264 ff., 299 ff.

<sup>20</sup> The flight of Khosrau to Emperor Mauricius and the appearance of the rebel Bahram had caused situations that could not be cured, *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 15 f.; *Histoire nestorienne*, III, p. 439 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Khosrau II Parvez ruled from 590 to 628.

<sup>22</sup> *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178-9.

<sup>24</sup> See page 264 ff., 299 ff.

<sup>25</sup> *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 442.

<sup>27</sup> In the 5th year of the rule of Khosrau, *Opus chronologicum*, p. 52; also *Histoire nestorienne*, p. 442.

<sup>28</sup> In the year 907 A.G., *De patriarchis*, p. 49.

<sup>1</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 390.

Abraham's name is not uniformly preserved in the tradition. Barḥadbešabbā introduced him as Mār Abraham Nišibnāiā<sup>2</sup>. Sūrīn, however, calls him Abraham bar Qardaḥē, i.e. 'Artisan'<sup>3</sup>. This is also the way his name appears in 'Abdišō'<sup>4</sup>. On this form of his name rests the Arabic tradition about Abraham ben al-Haddād in the Chronicle of Seert<sup>5</sup> and in Mari<sup>6</sup>.

Regarding the question of identification, there has been some confusion. The author whom Wright calls Abraham of Nisibis is not this director but actually Abraham of Bēt Rabban<sup>7</sup>. Nor is this director the man, called Abraham Nišibnāiā, about whom Bābai wrote a biography according to 'Abdišō'<sup>8</sup>. 'Abdišō' makes a mistake, since the Abraham he was talking about was Abraham of Kaškar. This is made clear in an anonymous source which made use of this work<sup>9</sup> and by the testimony of Bābai himself<sup>10</sup>.

There is an Abraham who appears in the work of Īšō'denah as a *mepašqānā* in Nisibis<sup>11</sup>, namely Abraham of Behqāwād, but this identification does not come into account here<sup>12</sup>.

Nothing is known about Abraham's background. Another text of the work of Barḥadbešabbā<sup>13</sup> fails to help us. Still another recension of it does not offer supplementary information in this connection<sup>14</sup>. Sūrīn<sup>15</sup>, the Chronicle of Seert<sup>16</sup> and Mari<sup>17</sup> leave us completely without help.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> *Mēmṛā de-abāhātā*, p. 400<sup>13-14</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, CLIII, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 194.

<sup>6</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> *Syriac Literature*, p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, LXVI, p. 97.

<sup>9</sup> Ms. Berl. Sach. 329, fol. 133b.

<sup>10</sup> In his biography of Giwargīs he says that he wrote a story of Abraham of Kaškar, *Taš'itā de-Mār Giwargīs*, p. 424.

<sup>11</sup> *ܡܥܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܪܝܬܐ* 'Mār Abraham, *mepašqānā* and martyr of Nisibis', *Livre de la chasteté*, XLII, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> See page 279 f.

<sup>13</sup> Ms. Šarf. Patr. 80, fol. 30b.

<sup>14</sup> *Integra narratio*, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Mēmṛā de-abāhātā*, p. 400.

<sup>16</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 194.

<sup>17</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 54.



originated in the school (as his lectures), or whether this is a reference to something else.

This list is concluded by the letters written against a certain Šisban<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps these were written against the Magi<sup>7</sup>.

Nothing of Abraham's literary creation has survived the vicissitudes of the centuries leaving us destitute of any sample of his literary creation.

<sup>6</sup> ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܕܢܗܐ ܕܡܕܢܗܐ ܕܡܕܢܗܐ 'and letters against Šisban', *ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>7</sup> See DUVAL, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 349.

## ḤENĀNĀ ḤADIABĀIĀ

## 1. ḤENĀNĀ'S PERSONALITY

The death of Mār Abraham of Nisibis brought a man into the office of directorship of the school, who not only took over the rule for a long period, but who also has played a rôle whose influence extended far beyond the activities within the school. This was Ḥenānā. In his person there appeared a director who could place his stamp on the entire epoch.

Ḥenānā was of Ḥadiab<sup>1</sup>, as the place of origin has been added to his name<sup>2</sup>. Almost nothing is known about his previous life. All we know of him is that he studied in the School of Nisibis, certainly under Abraham of Bēt Rabban. We also are informed that his teacher was Mōšē<sup>3</sup>. Who this Mōšē was<sup>4</sup> and whether this means that Ḥenānā had studied also elsewhere, is unknown. Nothing is known about his activities after he left the school. All we have is a short reference that he visited many places in the Orient<sup>5</sup>. It looks as if this cryptic remark made by a hostile writer could be interpreted to mean that Ḥenānā satisfied his thirst for learning also in other less reputable places. If so then we see here the beginnings of something that was to be a permanent feature in Ḥenānā's life.

<sup>1</sup> BARḤADBEŠABBĀ, *Fondation des écoles*, p. 390<sub>7</sub>.

<sup>2</sup> ܚܕܝܐܒܐܝܐ

<sup>3</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 509.

<sup>4</sup> There is the slight possibility that this Mōšē may have been the same Mōšē at whose request Thomas of Edessa composed his treatises, THOMAS OF EDESSA, *Tractatus de nativitate*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> This appears in connection with the alleged expulsion of Ḥenānā by Paulos, bishop of Nisibis. وما زال يدور في البلدان بالشرق الى ان مات ابراهيم قوابة. واحتال حتى صار مكانه of the Orient until the death of Abraham, Narsai's relative, and employed ruses until he obtained his place', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 530.

In tracing the very few scanty data about Ḥenānā's life a confusion must be avoided. Ḥenānā should not be mixed up<sup>6</sup> with another Ḥenānā, who likewise was an alumnus of the School of Nisibis and a man who was keenly interested in the welfare of his Alma Mater. This was Bishop Ḥenānā of Ḥadiab<sup>7</sup>. Our Ḥenānā did not possess bishop's consecration, having no higher rank than that of a presbyter<sup>8</sup>, not to speak of insurmountable chronological difficulties that stand in the way<sup>9</sup>.

The circumstances surrounding his call to the staff of the School of Nisibis are shrouded in obscurity. The earliest source we possess says nothing about this period. Barḥadbešabbā is simply silent about the years preceding the election of Ḥenānā to the office of director. But the Chronicle of Seert is not so quiescent. It testifies that Ḥenānā was on the teaching staff in the school when Paulos was bishop of Nisibis<sup>10</sup> and when Abraham held the office of directorship. That means that Ḥenānā was engaged in teaching in the school a number of years before 571 A.D., the year Paulos died<sup>11</sup>. This information appears in connection with another source which is eager to depict Ḥenānā as a troublemaker who had already so involved himself in trouble under Abraham that the bishop of Nisibis had to expel him<sup>12</sup>.

Ḥenānā's assumption of the helm is not clearly known. Leaving out all of the insinuations, trusting the gist of the information in the Chronicle of Seert, the implication that Ḥenānā's way to the seat was opened upon Bishop Paulos' death in 571 A.D. could be historical. Just how soon the responsibilities of the directorship were laid upon his shoulders is guesswork.

In Ḥenānā's person, the School of Nisibis received a director

<sup>6</sup> See HERMANN, *Schule von Nisibis*, p. 103, 119.

<sup>7</sup> MEŠĪḤĀZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XX, p. 73 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Statutes*, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> Bishop Ḥenānā was the successor of Jāusep, bishop of Arbēl, who died on the 4th of Ilūl in the 12th year of Qawad's rule, i.e. on the 4th of September 510, MEŠĪḤĀZEKĀ, *Histoire*, XX, p. 73<sub>84-85</sub>. The chronological gap between both Ḥenānās is irreconcilable.

<sup>10</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 530.

<sup>11</sup> See page 148.

<sup>12</sup> وقد كان فولوس مطران نصيبين طرده منها في أيام ابراهيم قرابة مار نرسی

'Paulos, metropolitan of Nisibis had expelled him from there during the time of Abraham, Narsai's relative', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 530<sub>4-5</sub>.



power of persuasion<sup>18</sup>. In this respect he was regarded as a unique teacher among his disciples<sup>19</sup>.

These faculties shone in the eyes of that company who had closer contact with him. To those who looked up to him with reverence, he appeared to be a quiet, compassionate and patient man, not after his own glory<sup>20</sup>. The reason for the latter was his humility<sup>21</sup>.

His resourcefulness, perseverance and the passion of his convictions charmed many. There is an expression that suits this man of Syrian temperament far too well to be an exaggeration — the one about his excessive enthusiasm, his passionate eagerness to stand for his convictions : ‘When he had put his feet on the rock of faith, and bent his shoulder on the spiritual work, he really fought in the spiritual arena <sup>22</sup>; he never ceased — he (indeed) was indefatigable’ <sup>23</sup>. In facts, this power was frequently put to the test, and his resourcefulness became manifest to those who followed this testing with sympathy. Barḥadbešabbā summarizes these experiences in an interesting way, without ignoring Ḥenānā’s part in difficulties : ‘Having seen all his quiver emptied upon the flock of Satan, the Enemy stirred up many controversies, strong contentions, and unending blasts, quarrels and divisions’ <sup>24</sup>.

Such a powerful personality was able to keep students under his spell. He inspired his pupils and they in turn expanded his renown and reputation. Those who became teachers brought something of his image into other schools. This is expressly stated by Barhadbeṣabbā : 'Through the witness of all his disciples his

[illegible]

<sup>19</sup> *ḥāšiv ḥalav l' kol ha-olam*: 'whoever is nourished by him does not need any other food', *ibid.*, p. 392<sub>5-8</sub>.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392<sub>10</sub>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390<sub>7-8</sub>.

22 στάδιον.

<sup>23</sup> *maḥa ml p'itro: ḥaḥuḥma ḥaḥe la mlgi ml ḥaḥe ba ḥaḥ*  
*ḥaḥ ḥaḥuḥ: ḥaḥuḥi ḥaḥuḥa ḥaḥ: ḥaḥuḥi ḥaḥuḥa la*  
*ḥaḥuḥa ḥaḥa ḥaḥa ibid., p. 391-3.*

<sup>24</sup> רחמים : כלפינו משהו של פחד מהעליונות והכוח  
הגדול של ה' : רחמים רבים ורחוקים  
רחמיך גדולים, *ibid.*, p. 390<sup>10-12</sup>.



<sup>20</sup> Ms. Bagd. 113, fol. 368a, 371b, 372b, 373a, 376b, 378a, 379b and 389a.

Some additional splinters of his lost commentaries on the Psalter emerge in an anonymous commentary on the Psalms<sup>21</sup>. What the *Gannat būssāmē* has preserved for us is very meager. It has only one reference to his work on Genesis<sup>22</sup>. Other channels remain closed to us.

The picture of his exegetical work in the field of the New Testament gives us no reason for rejoicing. Shreds of the commentaries on the New Testament books have found a place of refuge in the work of ʾĪšōʿdād, namely, in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew<sup>23</sup> and in his commentaries on the Corpus Paulinum, namely in those on Ephesians<sup>24</sup>, Philippians<sup>25</sup>, Colossians<sup>26</sup>, as well as in those on I Timothy<sup>27</sup>, II Timothy<sup>28</sup> and Hebrews<sup>29</sup>.

Very little is found in other sources to supplement the scanty remains. The *Gannat būssāmē* has a little more than others. Some remains emerge in the commentary on Matthew<sup>30</sup>, also in the commentaries on the I Corinthians<sup>31</sup>, Ephesians<sup>32</sup>, Colossians<sup>33</sup> as well as in those on II Timothy<sup>34</sup> and Hebrews<sup>35</sup>.

Timotheos, an author and catholicos, has preserved a reference to the commentary on the Gospel of Luke and has salvaged a quotation from it<sup>36</sup>.

Another category of ʿHenānā's work consisted of expositions devoted to other important documents on the theological and liturgical tradition. ʿAbdīšōʿ names his 'Commentary on the Sym-

<sup>21</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 58, fol. 17b-176b.

<sup>22</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 28, fol. 4b; Ms. Manch. Ryl. syr. 41, fol. 193b.

<sup>23</sup> *Commentaires*, II, p. 16 f., 90, 99, 120, 131 f., 145, 151, 172, 183, 197.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103, 105,

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115 (bis).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118, 120.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153 f., 156, 160, 169.

<sup>30</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 20, fol. 4a; cah. 28, fol. 9b; cah. 41, fol. 5b.

<sup>31</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 21, fol. 9a.

<sup>32</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 11, fol. 6a.

<sup>33</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 12, fol. 8b.

<sup>34</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 17, fol. 9b.

<sup>35</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 15, fol. 7b, cah. 37, fol. 5a.

<sup>36</sup> *Epistolae*, I, p. 87.

bol'<sup>37</sup>. Of the existence of this work we have another witness. We are informed that the author Bābai took issue with this work in which Henānā had directed himself against Theodore of Mopsuestia in order to refute the criticism<sup>38</sup>. Another commentary was devoted to 'the Mysteries'<sup>39</sup>, i.e. the liturgies.

Henānā's repertoire included writings designed to serve the liturgy. One cycle of tracts treated the festivals of the church year. With a few exceptions, only the titles are extant. 'Abdišo' mentions: 'The Cause of the Feast of 'ūšā'nā'<sup>40</sup> and '(The Cause) of the Invention'<sup>41</sup>,<sup>42</sup>. The rest, except for two, have vanished including the titles. These two are: 'The Cause of the Feast (called) the Friday of Gold'<sup>43</sup>,<sup>44</sup>, and 'The Cause of the Rogations'<sup>45</sup>.

It is probable that we possess a shred of another genre devoted to liturgical use, namely the genre of *bā'ūtā*. This is a piece<sup>46</sup> about which the tradition is divided — one ascribes it to Bābai bar Nišibnāiē and another to Henānā. The emergence of Henānā's name here is sufficient indication that it belongs to him. It is

<sup>37</sup> ܬܝܕܕܘܪܘܫ ܡܢ ܬܝܕܕܘܪܘܫ *Catalogus librorum*, LIX, p. 83.

<sup>38</sup> وعمل كتاباً في نقض ما عمله حنانياً من تفسير امانة الثلثمائة والثمينة عشر الذي خالف فيه رأى تبادوروس المفسر. وانفذه الى الآباء فقبلوه. ثم اجتمع سائر الاباء بكرخ جدان بمعاونة الخير يزددين وجدد وحرّم حنانياً ومن يعتقد مذهبه. وبينوا المواضع التي خالف فيها المفسر الاكبر وجميع الاباء 'he has written a work in order to

refute the commentary of Henānā on the faith of the 318 who attacked the teaching of Theodore the Interpreter; he sent it to the fathers and they accepted it; then Jazdin the Good gathered all the fathers in Karkā de Gūdan, and they renewed (the verdict) and anathematized Henānā and everyone who joined his teaching; they exposed the passages where he attacked the great Interpreter and the total body of the fathers', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 529<sup>a</sup>-530<sup>i</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> ܬܝܕܕܘܪܘܫ The word may mean the Eucharist or sacraments in general.

<sup>40</sup> ܬܝܕܕܘܪܘܫ ܡܢ ܬܝܕܕܘܪܘܫ *Catalogus librorum*, LIX, p. 83.

<sup>41</sup> This refers to the invention of the cross.

<sup>42</sup> ܬܝܕܕܘܪܘܫ, *ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>43</sup> The first Friday after Pentecost, with reference to Acts III, 6.

<sup>44</sup> *Traité sur le vendredi*, p. 53 ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Traité sur les rogations*, p. 68 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 507, fol. 69b-70a.

understandable why the censorious Bābai, adversary of Ḥenānā should be mentioned in this connection.

Perhaps 'the Questions' <sup>47</sup> also belonged to the area of liturgical materials <sup>48</sup> and dealt with the sacraments. The position of this writing in the nomenclature of 'Abdišō' seems to point in this direction <sup>49</sup>.

'Abdišō's list is concluded with a reference to 'A *memrā* of the Feast of the 'ūšā'nā' <sup>50</sup>. The scandalous weakness of this report is tangible for Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān speaks of numerous *mēmre* and of other works <sup>51</sup>.

The list in the nomenclature of 'Abdišō' barely scratches the surface. He tries to justify this kind of treatment by admitting that the literary creation Ḥenānā produced was far larger, but that doctrinal considerations had inspired him to temper the report : 'He has many (other) books, rejected on the account of the Interpreter <sup>52</sup> <sup>53</sup>.

### 3. ḤENĀNĀ'S REORIENTATION IN EXEGESIS

Among the directors of the School of Nisibis, the person of Ḥenānā appears as the most controversial. For his admirers, he was a coryphaeus without counterpart in the contemporary theological scene. For others, he was simply an *enfant terrible* who upset all the standards regarded as established.

In fact, in Ḥenānā we have to do with a man who, because of his character and spiritual qualities, found it difficult to follow the beaten track. Something in him would not be satisfied with the traditional line. Thus new stimuli were introduced into the instruction which at least in part was enriching. On the other

<sup>47</sup> ܬܠܩܬܝܐ *Catalogus librorum*, p. 83.

<sup>48</sup> About the character of the genre of the *šū'ālē*, see VööBUS, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, II.

<sup>49</sup> These *šū'ālē* are mentioned immediately after the work on the Mysteries and before other tracts written on liturgical subjects.

<sup>50</sup> ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ *Catalogus librorum*, p. 84.

<sup>51</sup> ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ 'he composed also many *mēmre* and disputations', *Fondation des écoles*, p. 391<sub>9-10</sub>.

<sup>52</sup> Namely Theodore of Mopsuestia.

<sup>53</sup> ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ ܬܠܩܬܝܐ *Catalogus librorum*, p. 84.

Up to this point the whole exegetical work of the School of Nisibis had rested upon the hermeneutical legacy of Theodore of Mopsuestia<sup>1</sup>. The undertaking of Abraham had substantially contributed to the accessibility of Theodore's thoughtworld<sup>2</sup>. This in turn set an example and pattern for other schools and centers of study in the entire church. Thus, strict Antiochian method, controlled by pure grammatical-historical exegesis, dominated the entire field<sup>3</sup>. Biblical studies were carried out with the conviction that no allowance could be made for any meaning in the biblical writings other than the literary meaning.

As to the extent of this change we have no clear idea. All we are allowed to see is limited to the little splinters which have managed to escape destruction and are at our disposal as the only

<sup>7</sup> 'Man is composed of body, soul and spirit, and the structure of Scripture has been planned by God for man's salvation in the same way', *De principiis*, IV, 2, 4, p. 112; *Commentarius Cant.* 2, p. 158.

samples of his hermeneutical approach. There are some shreds which reveal nothing unusual, like those extant from his commentaries on Genesis<sup>8</sup>, the Twelve Prophets<sup>9</sup> and the Psalms<sup>10</sup>. Here, of course, nothing extraordinary could be expected, since these commentaries were written in accordance with the standards of the ecclesiastical tradition<sup>11</sup>. They may also have belonged to an earlier period when he did not yet indulge in the allurements of allegorical adventures or did this only sporadically<sup>12</sup>. Different, however, is the climate that is unfolded in the citations of the commentaries on the gospels that occasionally enter into the field of vision. These exhibit a charge of high-voltage allegory<sup>13</sup>.

It is quite understandable that such a shift was unthinkable without some device of precaution. This explains Ḥenānā's endeavor to supplant the authority of Theodore with an ever-growing appreciation for the exegetical work of John Chrysostomos. Ḥenānā's choice among other calculations certainly was the fact that John's attitude towards the allegorical method was not so rigid<sup>14</sup> and that literary historical and scientific considerations seldom entered his thoughts. This attempt must be understood as a certain compromise between Ḥenānā's Alexandrian penchant and his critics from orthodox quarters. Interesting light falls on this question in connection with the exposition of the Book of Job. A controversy,

<sup>8</sup> Ṭšō'dād, *Commentaire*, I, p. 19 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Ṭšō'dād, *Kommentare zu Hosea, Joel*, p. 31, 37, 47, 51.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> See page 239 f.

<sup>12</sup> However it is interesting to observe that some symptoms of his interest in the direction of allegory appear in the remains of his commentary on Genesis. A good example is Gen. XXVII, 27 where the 'smell of a field' is explained allegorically, referring to the prophets and the apostles, Ṭšō'dād, *Commentaire*, I, p. 184. In this connection it also should be noted that Ḥenānā's interest in the hermeneutic principles of John Chrysostomos become manifest. Reflexions of this appear in several places.

<sup>13</sup> In the parable of the Leaven, Matth. XIII, 33, the 'three measures' are understood as a reference to three sons of Noah, from whom the nations and the tribes have sprung, Ṭšō'dād, *Commentaries*, II, p. 99. In the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, Matth. XX, 1-12, 'no man has hired us' means that none of the doctrines of the gospel had been revealed, *ibid.*, II, p. 131. In the parable of the Marriage Feast, Matth. XXII, 1-10, 'my oxen and fatlings are killed', means a prediction of the witness of the martyrs, *ibid.*, II, p. 135.

<sup>14</sup> He was willing to use allegorical exegesis only under certain circumstances. Cf. *Expositio in Psalmum*, XLIV, 5, col. 190 f.





#### 4. HENĀNĀ'S REORIENTATION IN THEOLOGY

The situation relative to weighing the question of Ḥenānā's heterodoxy is deplorable. In respect to the deviations of which he was accused, a chorus of his bitter adversaries press their accusations very hard and relentlessly. Some are very passionate, like Bābai. However, one must control carefully all these claims. An added difficulty is the fact that Ḥenānā's own works are no longer in existence. The church, anxious about the fate of its dogmatic position, did a thorough work of expurgating the whole literary heritage of this dissident who caused it so many headaches. We

<sup>4</sup> *Mēmṛā de-abāhātā*, p. 400<sub>14-15</sub>.



This conception of the person of Christ was a scandalon to Henānā. According to all our sources, Henānā was guilty of deserting the Nestorian position. But just why Theodore's definitions were unpalatable to him, we do not know. The lack of information is the more deplorable since here we have to do with important theological issues. At the heart of Theodore's christology lies the biblical thought-world with its concrete imagery. Besides, this conception has the very important historical merit to have provided a much needed balance against the ontological conceptions of the Alexandrians drawn from philosophical abstractions. Historically, through his appreciation of the human nature in Christ, and his keen interest in the biblical tradition, Theodore has salvaged Christendom from falling into pure speculation. It was due to him that at least in principle the human nature was secured in the formulations at Chalcedon in 451.

εὖ καὶ καλὰ δοκεῖν αὐτῷ περὶ αὐτῶν, *De incarnatione* VIII, p. 294. Such a cooperation envisaged by Theodore means that the two centers of will, initiative and action have the same purpose to be accomplished by their intimate relation: 'occulte vero eidem copulatus existens, non aberat cum formaretur non dividebatur cum nasceretur, loquenti coniunctus est, praesens in eius actibus perseverans, atque ibi suam connexionem sine peccato custodiens', in MARIUS MERCATOR, *Refutatio symboli*, col. 320.

<sup>10</sup> *Commentarius in Ev. Johannis*, VIII, 16, p. 119 f.; cf. *Contra Apollinarium*, IV, in FACUNDUS, *Pro defensione*, col. 755 f.

<sup>12</sup> *سكك*, *Evagrius Ponticus*, p. 460.

<sup>13</sup> *Liber de unione*, p. 109.

'You champion a union entirely' <sup>14</sup>. Further he relates that the followers of Ḥenānā, when put under pressure, were ready to admit two natures but adhered to the claim of one *qenūmā* <sup>15</sup>: 'two natures, one *qenūmā*' <sup>16</sup>. In the light of this critic, Ḥenānā accepted only one hypostasis in Christ, namely the divine <sup>17</sup>.

That Bābai is right in this contention is substantiated by a document which deserves the greater respect since it is official in character — namely the acts of a conference on doctrinal issues held in 612. When the christological position of the church was re-affirmed, keeping an eye on the deviations by which Ḥenānā had thrown the church into agitation and strife, a document was drafted to repudiate the opinions which Ḥenānā had introduced. One section is entitled: 'Against those who confess one nature or one *qenūmā* in Christ' <sup>18</sup>. This section begins with the basic issue in dispute: 'Since (there is) one nature and one *qenūmā* that you confess in Christ...' <sup>19</sup>.

What we have directly from Ḥenānā himself on this question is scant, nevertheless it seems to reflect this tenor <sup>20</sup>. But even without this trace, there can be no serious doubt about the fundamental components of his christological stand.

Something of Ḥenānā's reorientation in christological tenets can also be seen in the mirror of the doctrinal formulations made by his contemporary church authorities. It is an interesting phenomenon that Ḥenānā's views effected a shift in the doctrinal formulations designed to meet the acute needs of the situation.

To get a glimpse of the shift in the formulations, we need to quote Narsai first. In the *locus classicus* where he offers an encomium for the pillars of the Nestorian creed, he states: 'Two through the *keiānā* in all, what belongs to the highest being and

<sup>14</sup> ܬܥܡܕܝܢ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ *Tas'ūtā de-Mār Gīwargīs*, p. 497.

<sup>15</sup> This is the Syriac equivalent of 'hypostasis'.

<sup>16</sup> ܬܥܡܕܝܢ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ *ibid.*, p. 497.

<sup>17</sup> BĀBAI, *Liber de unione*, p. 209.

<sup>18</sup> ܠܡܥܠ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ *Synodicon orientale*, p. 568.

<sup>19</sup> ܬܥܡܕܝܢ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ *ibid.*, p. 568<sub>16</sub>.

<sup>20</sup> Some of these formulations are very instructive: ܬܥܡܕܝܢ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ 'the only begotten one came into the world through human birth', *Traité*, p. 59.

to the humanity — one through the glory and power, the Son of God; the Son of God is one through the *paršūpā* not through the *keiānā*<sup>21</sup>. As can be seen, the key terms upon which the christological definition rests are the *keiānā*<sup>22</sup> and *paršūpā*<sup>23</sup>. The constellation is the same in the creedal formulations adopted by the Synod held in Seleucia in the year 486 under Catholicos Aqāq. It speaks of the two *keiānē*<sup>24</sup> and then adds : 'We unite the diversities of the *keiānē* into one lordship and one adoration because of the perfect and unspeakable conjunction that happened to the humanity from the part of divinity'<sup>25</sup>. The formulations come to an end by the introduction of the term *paršūpā*<sup>26</sup>. This was the way the Nestorian church wanted to define its christological position when it laid the foundations for its existence.

Seen from this angle, the perspective clears itself up. A new ferment had come up and it eventuated in an enrichment of the christological formulations making them suitable for combatting the serious deviations and innovations proposed by Ḥenānā and spread by his rebel group. This new ferment appears in the definition necessitated as a reaction to Ḥenānā's approach. In a nutshell it appears as follows : 'Two *keiānē* and two *qenūmē*... in one *paršūpā* of Christ'<sup>27</sup>. This definition also appears in the official documents the church produced in connection with this controversy. One emerges in the doctrinal formulations adopted by the synod held under Catholicos Ṭṣō'iahb in 585<sup>28</sup>. Labourt here sees a reference to the decisions of the Second Council of Constantinople<sup>29</sup>. But this is by no means certain. Nor is there any cogent reason for

<sup>21</sup> וְיָזַק כְּחֶסֶד בְּדָוָה וְהָיָה לְהַחֲדָשׁ הַלְבוּשָׁה : וְעַתָּה הַחֲדָשׁ הַלְבוּשָׁה בָּרָא  
*Sur les trois docteurs*, p. 453. וְהָיָה לְהַחֲדָשׁ הַלְבוּשָׁה : וְעַתָּה הַחֲדָשׁ הַלְבוּשָׁה בָּרָא

22 'Nature'.

<sup>23</sup> Πρόσωπον, 'person'.

<sup>24</sup> Every one is forbidden to introduce mixture, or fusion or confusion here, can. I, *Synodicon orientale*, p. 551.3.

[illegible]

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 558.

<sup>27</sup> *Taš'itā de-Mār Giwar-giš*, p. 499.

<sup>28</sup> Can. I, *Synodicon orientale*, p. 136.

<sup>29</sup> *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 276.



manifest interest in the *paršūpā* reflects something of the dogmatic strife the church had to wrestle through with Ȩenānā. In the document composed in 612 against the adherents of Ȩenānā, it was given a fuller treatment: 'Christ... is one not in the oneness of the *keiānā* and of the *genūmā* but in one *paršūpā* of the Sonship'<sup>33</sup>. These formulations reveal what effectiveness was ascribed to the 'paršūpā of the Sonship', the 'praiseworthy mystery of one *paršūpā*'<sup>34</sup> or the 'paršūpā of honor'<sup>35</sup> in the time of crisis.

In this connection it is necessary to trace the history of this theologoumenon in order to avoid any precipitate inference. It should be observed that in this terminology and its very remarkable application, we do not have to do with a new element designed to meet the situation, but with a formula which existed much earlier. It appears already in Narsai. He speaks of one *paršūpā* of the two natures<sup>36</sup>. In his *mēmṛā* on the three pillars of the Nestorian creed he has more to say about this<sup>37</sup>. Moreover he uses the term in its peculiar application. In his *mēmṛā* devoted to 'one *paršūpā*' he explains it to mean that it is a sharing of honor and preeminence that unites the natures into one *paršupā*<sup>38</sup>.

Its history goes still further back. It is derived ultimately from the arsenal of christological definitions of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Bābai reports : ‘Behold, the blessed Theodore says so in the eighth book of his volume of the incarnation<sup>39</sup>, and there explains clearly the two natures and the two *genūmē* in one *paršūpā* of Christ’<sup>40</sup>. Nor does he speak fables. The work is lost but an excerpt in Greek

<sup>33</sup> ܐܡܢܝܢ... ܠܐ ܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ: ܠܐ ܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ  
ܡܪܝܬܐ *Synodicon orientale*, p. 575<sup>16-17</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> ܠܗܘܐ ܝܚܕܐ ܡܫܬܪܟܐ : ܠܗܘܐ ܡܨܬܪܟܐ ܕܥܝܢ ܝܚܕܐ ܕܐܝܬܐ  
ܡܫܬܪܟܐ ܡܥ 'keep, (he said) the praiseworthy mystery of the oneness of one substance  
(of God) and of human nature — one *parsūpā'*, PETROS, *Tas'itā de-Mār Sabrišō'*, p. 178.

<sup>35</sup> Ms. Alqōš 288, cah. 14, fol. 1a.

<sup>36</sup> Ms. Bagd. 605, fol. 277a; cf. his *nēmṛā* on 'the Word became Flesh', Ms. Vat. syr. 594, fol. 69a.

<sup>37</sup> *Les trois docteurs nestoriens*, p. 453 f.

<sup>38</sup> Ms. Bagd. 603, IV, fol., 1ab.

<sup>39</sup> Περὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως.

[illegible]

is quoted by Leontios of Byzantium <sup>41</sup>, and the reliability of this excerpt is substantiated by a fragment with a Syriac translation <sup>42</sup>. Indeed, the real source of this concept is Theodore, who regardless of his insistence on the separation of the two natures perceived the need for some kind of unity <sup>43</sup>, and for this purpose devised the concept of prosopon <sup>44</sup>, which naturally grew out of fundamental premises of his conceptions <sup>45</sup>, cast in an ingenious way <sup>46</sup> and developed fully as an integral and essential component in his christological conception <sup>47</sup>. These observations which help to elu-

<sup>41</sup> *Fragmenta*, col. 931.

<sup>42</sup> *Theodori fragmenta syriaca*, p. 70.

<sup>43</sup> In his hermeneutics Theodore is eager to keep neatly the distinction between the two natures. However, he kept closely enough to the Scriptures not to overlook the fact that the biblical tradition speaks of these natures in a way that regards them as one, cf. *Homélies catéchétiques*, VIII, 10, p. 200.

<sup>44</sup> To do justice to this fact he employed a special device: the *πρόσωπον*. There is abundant evidence for this. All the works we have, preserved in full or in fragments, testify to the fact that in this way Theodore understood the union of the two natures: *διὰ γὰρ ταύτης συναχθεῖσαι αἱ φύσεις ἐν πρόσωπον κατὰ τὴν ἑνωσιν ἀπετέλεσαν*, 'through the union the two natures which have been brought together make up our prosopon according to the union', *De incarnatione*, VIII, p. 299.

<sup>45</sup> Naturally this union must be understood so that it is congenial to the fundamental premises in Theodore's christological conception. Although he now admits that there is one Son but this one Son is a single object of faith. Strictly speaking the name 'Son' belongs only to one who is Son of God by nature. The unity is a result of the indwelling of the Logos in the man who becomes the adopted son. Thus the unity lies in the sharing of the title: 'maneat enim et naturarum ratio inconfusa, et indivisa cognoscatur esse persona. Illud quidem proprietate naturae, divisio quod assumptum est ab assumente; illud autem adunatione personae in una appellatione totius considerata sive assummentis, sive etiam assumpti naturae, et veluti sic dicam in Filii appellatione simul et Deum Verbum appellamus, et assumptam naturam, quaeque illa sit, consignificamus propter adunationem quam ad illum habet, *De incarnatione*, V, in FACUNDUS, *Pro defensione*, col. 748.

<sup>46</sup> There is another aspect which elucidates what Theodore meant by the prosopon. He uses another set of argumentation besides the ontological considerations. This is drawn from the realm of liturgy. Dignity, honor, glory given by adoration are employed to envisage the union through the prosopon. Here one can sense how Theodore found real satisfaction in developing his thoughts, cf. *Commentaire sur les Psaumes*, VIII, p. 43; cf. p. 48; *Homélies catéchétiques*, VIII, 13, p. 205 ff. This aspect is very important to understand the *communicatio idiomatum* according to Theodore.

<sup>47</sup> We are fortunate that these and similar statements find a fuller explanation in a text that emerges as the crowning evidence in a remnant that has survived from Theodore's work against Eunomios, namely from the 18th book in Syriac translation preserved in Ms. Cambr. or. 1319, and found by L. Abramowski, *Zitat aus Contra Eu-*





of perception to which he submitted the problem. His concept of sin has nothing to do with the realm of nature. In his commentary on the Psalms he states this with a precision and clarity of language which leaves nothing to be desired : sin cannot be attached to nature at all <sup>55</sup>. This is a text that is crystal clear <sup>56</sup>.

Other texts amplify the corollaries of this basic conviction. We are allowed to see how the penchant of the West <sup>57</sup>, that sin has to do with nature, appeared to Theodore as something very foolish. His abhorrent reaction prompted also special writings, directed against the advocates of original sin. We have a little more information about two books he wrote against this impossible opinion <sup>58</sup>. In fact, among the remains there is one titled : 'Against those who say : men sin out of nature and not with the will' <sup>59</sup>, which have found a place of refuge in the *Collectio Palatina* <sup>60</sup>. These lead us into the very midst of a vehement refutation against the view that in Adam's descendants sin has its very base in nature and has been inherited as original sin. Such a position is branded as heresy <sup>61</sup>. The arguments used here bear the mark of lucidity, penetration and logic, characteristic of Theodore's insights <sup>62</sup>.

There is another aspect which corroborates what has been ascertained already. Although what has been observed so far is of such a nature that it is sufficient, nevertheless since doubts have been raised, additional observations should be mentioned briefly. This

<sup>55</sup> It is stated with clarity that when children come into the world, they do not come laden with sin, *Commentaire sur les psaumes*, p. 337.

<sup>56</sup> It is, indeed, a mystery how Devreesse could use this plain text and arrive at a conclusion which the text does not warrant, *Essai sur Théodore*, p. 99.

<sup>57</sup> Its development was due to the influence of Augustinus.

<sup>58</sup> BARHADBEŠABBĀ, *Histoire*, II, p. 512.

<sup>59</sup> PHOTIUS, *Bibliotheca*, CLXXVII, col. 513.

<sup>60</sup> Contra sanctum Augustinum defendentem originale peccatum et Adam per transgressionem mortalem factum catholice disserantem, *Acta conciliorum oec.*, I, 5, p. 173. It is secondary for our purpose that the content of the excerpts shows that the author characterizes his theological adversary in a way that is not fitting for Augustinus. What the author tells about him fits in with Hieronymus rather than with Augustinus. Obviously his information about the Pelagian controversy was blurred.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173 f.

<sup>62</sup> He brings forward an argument which must have caused headaches to his critics : Christ took human nature upon himself; if, indeed, sin lies in human nature, then logically it must be inferred that Christ along with human nature took also sin upon himself; thus such premises lead to absurdity, *ibid.*, p. 176.

aspect unfolds how Theodore understood the condition of man after the fall of Adam. Here the important and instructive fact is that concupiscence appears in a different light — it did not originate from Adam's sinning but was already in Adam and caused his trespass<sup>63</sup>. Certainly there is a loss<sup>64</sup> after Adam's trespass, and this loss has brought about hardships of life<sup>65</sup>, and increased concupiscence<sup>66</sup> but there is no original sin that burdens Adam's descendants. However tragic the consequences and painful the effects all this is not original sin. The essential point is that the very being of man is not endangered by these catastrophes — namely the knowledge of good and evil<sup>67</sup> as well as the free will and power to make decisions between good and evil<sup>68</sup>.

Very important in this connection is furthermore what Theodore positively thought of sin and its very nature. For Theodore sin is always an act of the will. Therefore sin is always something that takes place against better knowledge<sup>69</sup>. In this conviction Theodore was so firmly rooted that he was ready to go against Paul<sup>70</sup>. On the basis of what Theodore himself says, there is only one conclusion possible : Theodore could see no reason why the idea of original sin should be imported into the Christian thought<sup>71</sup>.

The position at which Theodore had arrived, was adopted by Narsai and became normative for the School of Nisibis and the theology of the church. It was felt very suitable since it fitted in with the ancient Syrian traditions regarding the thoughts on

<sup>63</sup> *In ep. ad Romanos*, VII, 8, col. 809; cf. *Pauluskommentare*, p. 127.

<sup>64</sup> Namely the loss of paradise and the image of God, *Fragments in Genesis*, II, 8, col. 637.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 637, 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Romans*, V, 18-19, *Pauluskommentare*, p. 120 f.

<sup>67</sup> *Romans*, XI, 15, *ibid.*, p. 156 f.

<sup>68</sup> *In ep. ad Romanos*, IX, 4, col. 836 f.; *Romans* IX, 14-21, *Pauluskommentare*, p. 144 f. Our will can also be holy, *In I Corinthios*, VII, 14, col. 885.

<sup>69</sup> *Pauluskommentare*, p. 127.

<sup>70</sup> In the classical passus in *Rom.*, V, 13-14, he simply ignores what Paul wants to say and declares that death is punishment for personal sins not punishment for Adam's sins as Paul claims : τοῦτο λέγει ὅτι ὁ θάνατος ἐκράτησεν πάντων τῶν ὁπωσδήποτε ἡμαρτηκότων · οὐ γάρ, ἐπειδὴ οὐχ ὅμοιον ἦν τὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας εἶδος, τό τε τοῦ Ἀδάμ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀνθρώπων, θανάτου γεγόνασιν ἐκτὸς οἱ λοιποί, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ὧν ἡμάρτανον ὁπωσδήποτε τοῦ θανάτου τὴν ἀπόφασιν ἐδέξατο πάντες, *Pauluskommentare*, p. 119, cf. p. 126.

<sup>71</sup> Vööbus, *Anthropology of Theodore*, p. 118 ff.

sin and the emphasis on free will, as seen in Aphrahaṭ<sup>72</sup> and Ephrēm<sup>73</sup>. Thus the ground prepared by the ancient Syrian tenets<sup>74</sup> was very fertile for these views.

All this was something which did not appeal to Henānā. His departure from the normative theology is echoed in all the curious reproaches and charges brought against him. Bābai throws bitter accusations against Henānā calling him a 'Chaldaean', not only in a popularly written work<sup>75</sup> but also in a theological diatribe<sup>76</sup>. He explains what his hints mean: 'That one teaches the fatum and proclaims the determinism'<sup>77</sup>. His insinuations reveal the depth of his excitement. He is horrified as a result of pondering on the consequences of the direction Henānā has taken. He is holding up his hands in consternation: if everything is determined already by birth, then punishment as well as reward become meaningless<sup>78</sup>. Although Bābai hammers incessantly at this point, he cannot convince us. If this situation had really existed, we would hear more of the noise of such a controversy. This is an exaggeration we can ignore. However there must have been some reason behind it.

<sup>72</sup> He envisaged the rule of sin in a way which regardless of its ravage and violence met with restraint and was kept in certain limits. Consequently it was conceived not as something that at once entered human nature and permeated it totally. Through the fall of the progenitor human nature was not submitted to corruption and depravity, making mankind a mass of sinners, *Demonstrationes*, VII, col. 313. Cf. *Dem.* III, col. 101; *Dem.* XXIII, *ibid.*, II, col. 12, 21, 24. Concupiscence is not a result of Adam's trespass but was already in Adam before his fall, *Dem.*, XIV, *ibid.*, I, col. 685; see VÖÖBUS, *Aphrahaṭ*, p. 154; about the archaic traditions in Aphrahaṭ, see VÖÖBUS, *Celibacy*, p. 45 ff., and also *Methodologisches zum Studium*, p. 25 ff.

<sup>73</sup> His definition of sin makes it impossible to accept original sin. Sin for him is 'a matter of freedom', *Contra haereses*, XVIII, 3, p. 64, and its roots are in the will, *De virginitate*, III, 8, p. 9; cf. *Contra haereses* XXI, 5, p. 74. Therefore its place cannot be in nature, *Discourse to Hypatius*, V, *Prose Refutations*, I, p. 144 ff. Therefore human nature has not been affected, changed and made bad, *Hymni de ecclesia*, III, 4, II, col. 784. As human freedom so also the will has remained intact, *Carmina Nisibena*, XXI, p. 37. Again and again statements emerge which reveal his keen interest and his vigorous emphasis on the will, *Sermo de fide*, IV, 75-78, p. 33. The will can lead to the highest level of perfection in mortification, cf. VÖÖBUS, *Literary-Critical Studies in Ephrem*, p. 102 ff.

<sup>74</sup> VÖÖBUS, *Human Nature in Syrian Traditions*, p. 103 ff.

<sup>75</sup> *Taš'itā de-Mār Gwargis*, p. 496.

<sup>76</sup> *Liber de unione*, p. 109.

<sup>77</sup> *Taš'itā de-Mār Gwargis*, p. 477.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 503 f.



the truth'<sup>82</sup>. He expresses himself even more clearly : 'Let us fight against the sinful passions of the soul and against the wild movements of the body; let us not submit our will to the passions and let us not abase our freedom to the (level) of the debt of our (desirous) movements'<sup>83</sup>. Therefore he exhorts : 'Let us love privation of the earthly possessions because this is the richness of the heavenly possessions'<sup>84</sup>.

There is still another aspect which is closely related to the views of Ḥenānā regarding original sin. It helps us to be more precise concerning the views he adopted and the extent of his departure from Theodore.

Also here some explanatory remarks become indispensable since Devreesse has claimed that also in this question Theodore represents orthodoxy — the immortal status given to Adam by creation<sup>85</sup>.

Unequivocal conclusions regarding the rôle of death relative to original sin appear in the commentary on Genesis. Death is not a result of Adam's trespassing, since Adam was already created mortal<sup>86</sup>. He sees this condition expressed so clearly in the biblical texts. The very fact that a couple was created is a proof for Theodore that they were created for begetting and therefore for temporal life<sup>87</sup>. As the texts regarding the creation of man indicate his temporal nature so also do the texts regarding the sentence passed on the couple after the trespass<sup>88</sup>. Also consistency in

<sup>82</sup> כעם . קיבוץ קיבוץ כל קיבוץ קיבוץ ל קיבוץ יל כל  
קיבוץ קיבוץ , מ קיבוץ קיבוץ א קיבוץ *Traité*, p. 66.

<sup>83</sup> כלל שם בזהב למשל שקו חסותק ונפער . הלמל וקכ  
חזתק ונפער . הלל עכד . חסל לשק הלל בשש כחוק  
*ibid.*, p. 66. ,לסכח ונח ונח

<sup>84</sup> ጊዜያዊ የሕግና ጥያቄ ማስፈጸሚያ ሚኒስቴር፣ ወ.፡፡ ጊዜያዊ የሕግና ጥያቄ ማስፈጸሚያ ሚኒስቴር፣ *ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>85</sup> *Essai sur Théodore*, p. 98.

<sup>86</sup> *Fragmenta in Genesin*, III, 17, col. 640 f.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 640.

<sup>88</sup> Theodore observes that the biblical text says that the couple shall die and not that they become mortal: 'Non ait « mortales eritis », sed morte moriemini, prorsus existentibus natura mortalibus inferre mortis experientiam comminatus, quam etiam iuxta morem propriae benignitatis ad effectum perducere distulit. Sicut enim eum dicit qui effuderit hominis sanguinem, sanguis eius pro eo fundetur, non hoc dicit quia qui occiderit hominem, erit mortalis, sed quia dignus est huiusmodi morte damnari, sic et in praesentiarum dixit « morte moriemini », non quod tunc mortales fierent, sed quod

God's actions prohibits any other conclusion<sup>89</sup>. Thus the arguments, whether exegetical, theological or logical, lead to the same conclusion that Adam could not be immortal but mortal. Again and again Theodore presents this as an axiom. In this all the various layers of the remains of Theodore's literary heritage, namely his commentaries<sup>90</sup>, his theological works<sup>91</sup> as well as traditions preserved in the *Collectio Palatina*<sup>92</sup> give a concerted testimony.

To get a glimpse of the real importance of this premise in Theodore's theology, one has to realize that we stand face to face with the very premise that is structural in his theological system. This premise is the very basis for his system of the two katastases.

The characteristic pattern in Theodore's theology lies in the fact that in the presentation of the history of the salvation of mankind, he went his own way. Traditionally this history has been divided into three periods: the katastasis of the paradise, the katastasis of the present life beginning with Adam's fall, and the katastasis of the future — representing the ideal status, the struggle under the burden of the lost status, and the restoration into the status of the paradise. Owing to his premise just elucidated he could not follow this pattern, but had to mold it for his own premise. Thus Theodore envisaged the history of salvation quite differently employing only two schemes: the first katastasis is the present one of mortality<sup>93</sup>, beginning with Adam and ending with the

digni essent qui mortis sententiam pro transgressione referrent, *Contra Augustinum*, p. 173<sub>21-27</sub>.

<sup>89</sup> God's sentence did not make even Satan, the principle of all evil, from an immortal into mortal much less Adam, *ibid.*, p. 174. Theodore revolted against the assumption that after the fall God took back His gift of immortality; one trespass could not change God's intentions and plans: 'Novissime vero in hanc dogmatis reccidit novitatem qua diceret quod ira atque furore deus Adam mortalem esse praeceperit et propter eius unum delictum cunctos et neceum natos homines morte multaverit. Sic autem disputans non veretur nec confunditur ea sentire de deo quae nec de hominibus sanum sapientibus et aliquam iustitiae curam gerentibus unquam quis aestimare temptavit', *ibid.*, p. 174<sub>33-37</sub>; 'sed vir mirabilis propter unum peccatum Adae tanto furore commotum arbitratus est deum, ut et illum atrocissimae poenae subderet et ad universos omnes posteros eius parem sententiam promulgaret (et), inter quos quanti iusti fuerint, non facile numerare quis poterit', *ibid.* p. 175<sub>3-6</sub>.

<sup>90</sup> *In ep. ad Galatas*, II, 15-16, p. 25 f.

<sup>91</sup> *De creatura*, col. 633 f.

<sup>92</sup> *Contra Augustinum*, p. 174 ff.

<sup>93</sup> *In Jonam*, col. 317; cf. Rom., V, 13-14, 16, *Pauluskommentare*, p. 119 f.

According to the evidence Ḥenānā had no appreciation also for this view in Theodore's theology, and abandoned it. The few data we possess are sufficient for this conclusion. One of the criticisms Bābai launched against Ḥenānā was that he ascribed to man a divine nature in the Apokatastasis<sup>101</sup>. This reproach obviously means that he was irritated by the contention that Adam was created immortal, and that in the Apokatastasis he would again have his pristine status. That such was really Ḥenānā's conviction is born out by an official document, drafted by the synodical convocation under Catholicos Sabrišō' in 596 and directed against Ḥenānā and his followers. This decision excludes from the church 'everyone who says that the nature of Adam originally was created immortal'<sup>102</sup>.

<sup>102</sup> *Synodicon* ܪܒܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܥܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ, ܡܥܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܥܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ, *orientale*, p. 199-2.

Bābai has still other gravamina against Ḥenānā. However, we cannot take him seriously in whatever else he has to say<sup>103</sup>.

Repeatedly Ḥenānā's thought-world has been brought into relation with that of Origen. Much of this is as thoughtless<sup>104</sup> as other charges we have already mentioned. However, there is something which seems to be true. It is understandable that a man whose soul did not find satisfaction in the matter-of-fact and strict scholarly atmosphere of Antiochian theology could feel at home with an author who moves freely along the boundaries between biblical theology and neo-Platonistic philosophy. Mystical inclinations also could have been entertained by the master of Alexandria. Unfortunately we are not able to explore this avenue. That some of these features have exercised their influence upon Ḥenānā is indeed beyond doubt. Something like this in Ḥenānā must have appealed to a man like Jāusep Ḥazzāiā<sup>105</sup> who must have found here a congenial atmosphere<sup>106</sup>.

##### 5. SIGNS OF DISCONTENT

As we have already seen, in theological thoughts Ḥenānā preferred to go his own way. He was determined to follow this route regardless of the fact that he had to pay a heavy price, even if it exposed his life and work to troubles and difficulties. Can we learn something about the time such problems began to trouble him thus throwing the first shadow over the school? In view of the present condition of our sources, it is too much to hope for a satisfactory answer to this question. However an attempt must be made.

Certain clues indicate that the initial dose of difficulty belongs to the earliest period of his career. These come up so persistently that the impression is left that we have to do with something which is not ephemeral. This is so even if we do not regard everything as trustworthy and evaluate the traditions quite critically.

There is even a tradition that these troubles, in the form of

<sup>103</sup> Ḥenānā is here reported to have denied the resurrection of the body, admitting only salvation of the souls, *Taš'itā de-Mār Giwargis*, p. 477.

<sup>104</sup> The doctrine of apokatastasis, *ibid.*, p. 477.

<sup>105</sup> IŠO'DENAḤ, *Livre de la chasteté*, CXXV, p. 64 ff. He was condemned under Catholics Timotheos, cf. Ms. Vat. syr., 520, fol. 41b, 42a.

<sup>106</sup> IBN AṬ-ṬAIYIB, *Fiqh an-naṣrānīya*, II, p. 185 f.

grave conflict, begin in the period prior to his appointment to the office of the *mepašqānā*. This is what the Chronicle of Seert claims. It says that these troubles reach as far back as the period of the directorship of Abraham. According to it Paulos, metropolitan of Nisibis, was compelled to take action against him and to expel him from Nisibis. After Abraham's death, Ḥenānā used clever tricks and eventually obtained his position again<sup>1</sup>. This tradition appears in a section eager to depict Ḥenānā as a trouble-maker<sup>2</sup>. The value of this contention, owing to the biased character of our document, is dubious, very dubious indeed. Much in our sources is discolored by this brush of contempt. This bit of information in the present form seems to come from the same pot of paint. It is not strange that the troubles to which this man was related and which were so deeply strained upon the memory of the champions of confessionalism, were projected back to the very beginning of his scholarly career.

Other information seems to be of a different character. It does not have to do with Ḥenānā directly but leads us close to the surroundings of the School of Nisibis under Ḥenānā's leadership. What we can learn about the activities obviously aimed at the School of Nisibis certainly deserves to be followed up. The data about the establishment of a school so close to the School of Nisibis certainly spring to the eye. We owe this tradition to ʾĪšō'denaḥ<sup>3</sup>. According to it, Deacon Eliša' initiated preparations to establish a school in Nisibis. That the place selected was Nisibis, close to the school which Ḥenānā directed, arrests our steps. This fact seems to be a possible hint about rivalry. If so, this could not have taken place without the support and backing of the highest authorities. In fact we learn that Mār Eliiā, metropolitan of Nisibis, was the man who gave his support and fostered its materialization. The institution that was established was 'the School of Bēt Sahdē, in Nisibis, at the gate by the mountain'<sup>4</sup>. He also made efforts to give an air of respectability to the new school by

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 530.

<sup>2</sup> The text first speaks of Ḥenānā's condemnation by ʾĪšō'iahb, Sabrišō' and Grīgōr, *ibid.*, p. 530.

<sup>3</sup> *Livre de la chasteté*, XLI, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> ܩܝܡܬܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ *ibid.*, p. 261.





Whatever may have been Bābai's motivation in setting up teaching at the hospital in Nisibis, other clues lead more clearly in the same direction.

That our suspicions are confirmed is shown by another observation. Bābai's sympathies, which belonged to the place where the rival teaching was carried out have found expression in his literary life. He erected a monument for Abīmelek in his biography 'History of the Priest and Martyr Abīmelek of Qardū' <sup>18</sup>. This is in addition to the praise he gave an author who openly attacked those of Ḥenānā's colleagues who had become champions of his theological views <sup>19</sup>. He eulogizes Giwargīs who in collaboration with a 'brother' from the Īzlā Monastery led a battle of controversy against Ḥenānā <sup>20</sup>. This was a fight which drew Bābai himself actively into battle <sup>21</sup>.

All we can learn from the sources and between the lines encourages us to think that we have some real glimpses of historical happenings before us and not a *fata morgana*. It may be that we do not see all the points we have discussed in the right context, nevertheless what remains is still instructive. The point to seize upon is that Ḥenānā's views were not conceived suddenly but have had a longer history. He was slowly led forward in the process of change in his thinking or at least in the emphasis with which he brought it to the fore. Parallel to this were the effects of the germs of discord he planted in the Nestorian theology. Already in the early part of his directorship, he must have caused disappointment to the Nestorian doctrinal heritage. Furthermore, at a very early date precautionary measures were undertaken and foundations were laid for a bulwark against the dreaded influence. This brought with it the first unpleasant experiences. However, the suspicions aroused and the attempts made to neutralize what was regarded with apprehension were not enough to influence Ḥenānā. He refused to see these signs and their meaning. However, all that took place at this time was only a skirmish. The position towards which he moved, necessarily led him into greater troubles which, indeed, were bound to plague him throughout his life.

<sup>18</sup> BĀBAI, *Taš'itū de-Mār Giwargīs*, p. 427.

<sup>19</sup> See page 276 f.

<sup>20</sup> BĀBAI, *Taš'itū de-Mār Giwargīs*, p. 495 f.

<sup>21</sup> See page 290.

6. THE STATUTES OF ḤENĀNĀ

We are grateful that we have some information about the origin of the statutes which were set up under Ḥenānā's rule. This important event in the history of the legislation of the school has registered at least some of the data in which we can be interested.

A short preamble added to the statutes<sup>1</sup>, informs us about the time of its fixation. The cycle of regulations was established in the 12th year of the victory of Hormizd<sup>2</sup>, eulogized here as 'merciful and beneficent'<sup>3</sup>, reflecting one of the most favorable epochs in the history of Christianity under the Persian rulers. This was the year 590 A.D. Some further remarks about other circumstances are included in the same account. We are told that Šem'ōn occupied the seat of the metropolitan of Nisibis at that time. He was the man to whom the statutes were submitted for approval, and who sanctioned them. This, by the way, is the same prelate who appears in the synodical acts of the year 585 in connection with a serious rift in the church<sup>4</sup>; he is also mentioned in the canons of Dadišō<sup>5</sup>. Still other data are recorded in the same preamble. However, the mention of Qaššā, a teacher, Mār Ḥenanīšō, the presbyter, and Hūh, the *rabbaitā*<sup>6</sup>, does not help us much since nothing is known about these personalities from any other source.

This time we are permitted a somewhat closer look into conditions about which we would like to know more. It is true that the

<sup>1</sup> *Statutes*, p. 89 f.

<sup>2</sup> What is meant here is the event of his enthronement in February 579 following Khosrau I.

<sup>3</sup> Christian sources praise his magnanimity and kindness as being greater than that of any other king had offered, *Histoire nestorienne*, VII, p. 195. His reply to the Magi reveals his patent sympathy for the Christians, as this is demonstrated by a reliable tradition, see ṬABARĪ, *Ta'riḥ ar-rusul*, p. 990 f. The non-Christian sources in their judgement are divided. Bal'amī eulogizes his actions and claims that his justice surpassed that of Anōširvan, *Chronique*, II, p. 246. Also Hišām ibn Muḥammad, see ṬABARĪ, *Ta'riḥ ar-rusul*, p. 988. Ṭabarī quotes another source according to which he was reckless towards the nobles and the influential people, *ibid.*, p. 990.

<sup>4</sup> Can. XXX reports about the schism between Šem'ōn and Grigōr of Rēv Ardāšīr which was so serious that both contenders were threatened with suspension, *Synodicon orientale*, p. 163.

<sup>5</sup> These canons, composed in the 10th year of the rule of Hormizd, i.e. January 588 refer to him as 'the martyr and holy Mār Šem'ōn', DADIŠŌ, *Qānūne*, p. 165.

<sup>6</sup> *Statutes*, p. 92.

preamble gives us but very vague allusions to the situation which necessitated the new legislation. Clues in other sources are tantalizingly meager. However, we can learn a little. We are given to understand that under Ḥenānā's leadership, new winds began to blow within the walls of a school already having a tradition of venerable age. New life was engendered. It brought the school to its élan <sup>7</sup>. This information allows room for reasonable suppositions. It is natural to think and assume that such a large community of students must have had its share of problems. Some were no doubt pressing. From the point of view of education, it must have been difficult to maintain order and to keep standards high. A tightening of the disciplinary procedures is just what we would expect as a result of the increase in the size of the community of students.

Other factors must have motivated a new look at the legislative norms of the school. The school could look back upon a period of almost a century since the last rules were established <sup>8</sup>. But in the meantime the conditions as well as the needs could not remain the same. With changes in the silhouette of its physical plant <sup>9</sup> the life it embraced also experienced certain changes. Thus, the school had outgrown the rules which were regarded as adequate during the first phase in its history.

What has been surmised is confirmed in the texts themselves. Occasionally they come closer to their background situation and speak a little more clearly. Let them tell us what they have to say.

To begin with, the symptoms of an influx of students seem to be transparent. These come out in the measures taken to meet the situation. A test is introduced, and the *rabbaitā* and the outstanding brothers are entrusted with the responsibility of administering it : 'The brothers who come to the instruction before the time indicated for the reading of the words of the books and the hearing of the meaning (of them) shall not give themselves to the reading and hearing of the group; these shall be tested with the canon <sup>10</sup> by

<sup>7</sup> See page 282 ff.

<sup>8</sup> See page 93 ff.

<sup>9</sup> See page 143 ff.

<sup>10</sup> A brief epitome of these canons understands this as a 'matter of faith', Ms. Par. syr. 306, fol. 111b, which certainly is too narrow.

the *rabbaitā* and outstanding brothers' <sup>11</sup>. Thus before admission a selection took place. Students were admitted after satisfying the *rabbaitā* and a committee or the council of the leading brothers of their fitness.

The same symptoms are perceptible in the regulations designed to carry out discipline among the students. To dwell outside the school of Nisibis means expulsion from the school <sup>12</sup>. Any argument in favor of life in separation and isolation resolutely is rejected, including arguments which seek cover behind religion : 'If he desires to excel, he may go into a monastery or into the desert' <sup>13</sup>. To neglect the time devoted to religious devotion and study invites the consequence that 'he shall not be excused' <sup>14</sup>. Attending the vigils in the town and participating in the commemorations without the permission of the *rabbaitā* earns suspension <sup>15</sup> and contact with women in prolonged talk <sup>16</sup> expulsion from the community of the school.

Thus, the *mise-en-scène* reflects a growing need for stricter discipline. There may have been other reasons for these regulations<sup>17</sup> but evidence in substantiation is absent.

Another ruling seems to belong to the same set of needs caused by the influx of students. It concerns the graduation. Here we learn that the *malpānā* was responsible for sending them out to the places of their new responsibilities : 'The brothers who excel in the learning and further appear (that they are) able to teach others, are ordered by the *malpānā* to go and to teach'<sup>18</sup>. A difficulty in connection with the graduation had arisen which neces-

<sup>11</sup> כִּתְּבָה וְנִדְחָה לַעֲלֹמָיָא מֵרַם הַכֶּסֶף בְּפִי שְׂרָפָה וְנִדְחָה לַעֲלֹמָיָא  
וְנִדְחָה לַעֲלֹמָיָא . לִמְלֵךְ הַכֶּסֶף וְנִדְחָה לַעֲלֹמָיָא .  
can. XV, חֲזָקָה עַל הַכֶּסֶף בְּפִי שְׂרָפָה וְנִדְחָה לַעֲלֹמָיָא .  
*Statutes*, p. 98 f.

<sup>12</sup> Can. II, *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> כִּי יִשְׁלַח אֶת יָדָיו לְהַחֲזֹק בְּכֶסֶף הַיָּם. — *can. IV, ibid., p. 94.*

<sup>14</sup> Can. V, *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>15</sup> Can. XIII, *ibid.*, p. 97 f.

<sup>16</sup> Can. XVIII, *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>17</sup> Scher has suggested that the promulgation of the statutes must have been in connection with the effects the exodus had caused, *PO*, VII, p. 10.

[illegible]



ment : 'Without the *malpānā* of the school, he shall not arrange income and expenses of the school'<sup>25</sup>. This rule is accompanied by several norms of penalties. Stealing brings dismissal : 'And further he shall not steal or be unfaithful in something that had been entrusted to him in order to manage it'<sup>26</sup>. This is developed into a small penal code : 'If it is found that he does not do one of these that are written in these canons, everything that he has defrauded or concealed, shall be taken from him'<sup>27</sup>. Finally, dismissal brings with it another sentence : 'He shall give as punishment money<sup>28</sup>, 50 '*estirēn*<sup>29</sup> for the xenodocheion; then he shall leave the school and the town in shame'<sup>30</sup>.

Other matters needed to be fixed in the rules to make them adequate for present conditions. For some of these, we have a better place in another section<sup>31</sup>. But one needs to be touched upon here. It concerns the protection of the library facilities. Already in the old rules it was a matter which, as practice showed, was necessary. There however it was mentioned *inter alia* among the things which were forgotten in the process of time and appropriated unlawfully by persons who had no right to them<sup>32</sup>. The fact that a special canon is now reserved for this matter indicates that the problem had become more acute as the school grew. Thus the issue became a special item in the statutes. It was the very basis for the orientation of the new students and the norm for their life and work in the school : 'The books which have been determined for the school by the brothers who have deceased — if somebody of the *rabaibātē* or of the brothers is caught that he blurs the

25 *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 93.

27 *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> The text has *zūzē*, the plural of *zūz*, a coin equal to a Greek drachma or to a quarter shekel of Jewish money. Here it is not used in its exact meaning but in general sense as money.

<sup>29</sup> 'Estirā, a stater, worth four zūzē.

30 *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>31</sup> See page 282 ff.

<sup>32</sup> See page 98.





## 7. TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOL UNDER ḤENĀNĀ

## a. Iṣa'īā of Taḥal

Iṣa'īā was one of those who was particularly loyal to the director in his thinking and action. He too was included among those few in the hour when the crisis struck the school and the exodus led away teachers and students<sup>1</sup>.

Apparently he was engaged in the field of theology. He did not hesitate to come out as an advocate of the line of thought set in motion by Ḥenānā. It is quite understandable that none of these controversial writings had a future and thus all were lost. Even their titles have not been regarded as worthy of remembrance by the tradition. We have but indirect evidence about their existence at our disposal. Ḥenānīšō', fervent for orthodoxy<sup>2</sup> and engaged in controversy with the heretics<sup>3</sup>, felt challenged by these writings and composed works in order to refute the theological position presented. Catholicos Iṣō'iahb III<sup>4</sup> and the Chronicle of Seert<sup>5</sup> are witnesses. One of such writings is extant, entitled: 'A Disputation against the Heretics'<sup>6</sup>. Perhaps Iṣa'īā was the target for another work produced by him<sup>7</sup>. His writings, judging from the counter-measures undertaken against them, must have exercised considerable influence and attention. Even Bābai had to bring his artillery into the battle. He has written against Iṣa'īā's publications<sup>8</sup>. Under concentrated attack, his writings were anathema-

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 511.

<sup>2</sup> BĀBAI, *Taš'itā de-Mār Giwargīs*, p. 514.

<sup>3</sup> IṢŌ'DENAḤ, *Livre de la chasteté*, XXI, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Liber epistolarum*, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> وعمل كتابًا نقض فيه رسالة اشعيا التاحلي 'he composed a book

in which he refuted the message of Iṣa'īā Tahlāiā', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 535.

<sup>6</sup> Ms. Berl. Pet. 9, fol. 180b-182a.

<sup>7</sup> Ms. Seert 87, VI<sup>e</sup>, which was titled 'Chapters of Disputation against the Heretics', see SCHER, *Catalogue*, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> كتاب فيه نقض مذهب اشعيا التاحلي المخالف 'the book in which he refuted the belief of Iṣai Tahlāiā, the dissident', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 534.

tized by Catholicos ʾĪšō'iahb who may have been ʾĪšō'iahb II<sup>9</sup> or ʾĪšō'iahb III<sup>10</sup>.

b. Meskēnā of Bēt 'Arbāiē

Meskēnā stands still further back in a valley of obscurity. We know that he was among the few teachers who remained loyal to Ḥenānā in the hour of trial. When the exodus took place, he remained with Ḥenānā<sup>11</sup>.

The only other information we have is very obscure. It is reported that Meskēnā 'Arbāiā was also in the School of Bālād<sup>12</sup>. The last bit of information is enigmatic. If it is historical, and if the school meant is the one founded by Bishop Marqos<sup>13</sup>, then this reference may throw a ray of light on troubles which did not end with the exodus. That a loyal follower of Ḥenānā could be for a certain period of time in the school built up as a stronghold of the embittered opponents of Ḥenānā, can mean only that he could be there by some energetic action on the part of the highest authority. Some retaliatory measure taken by the patriarch for the troublesome new community of the school is not unthinkable. However, it is also possible that what is meant here is not the newly established but a different school.

Still worse is our information about his literary work. Like ʾĪsā'īā, he seems to have been engaged with dogmatic problems. We possess no knowledge of a single work. The tradition has deemed it important to remember only his opponent, the same Ḥenānīšō', the watchful guardian of the orthodox position, who wrote against his views. With satisfaction does the tradition wish to remember that, in this duel, the rebel was silenced<sup>14</sup>. It is possible that here too Bābai had to enter the fray since his help was needed<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> ʾĪsā'īā's writings were condemned by ʾĪšō'iahb of Bēt 'Arbāiē, i.e. ʾĪšō'iahb II, according to the testimony of the Chronicle of Seert, *ibid.*, p. 635.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Nomocanon*, IX, 6, p. 167.

<sup>11</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 511.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.

<sup>13</sup> See page 311.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.

<sup>15</sup> There is a possibility that the text is corrupt and Meskēnā is to be thought of as one of the heretics against whom Bābai wrote, namely Massiā, *ibid.*, p. 534.

## c. Mīka'ēl

Mīka'ēl was one of that company who marched in the exodus procession and abandoned the school<sup>16</sup>. He is called 'malpānā' in the same source. Elsewhere he appears even as a 'malpānā rabā'<sup>17</sup>. It is clear that he was a teacher at that time. He was known as a *badūqā*<sup>18</sup>. In another source he appears as a 'mepašqānā and *badūqā*'<sup>19</sup>.

His life and work is most dimly illuminated. Sūrīn speaks of him and his work with amazement and refers respectfully to him as 'Mār Mīka'ēl, a disciple of the truth and famous writer'<sup>20</sup>. The more is it regrettable that we are not allowed to discover the extent of his literary life which earned him such a reputation. Šelēmōn of Bāsrā knew one of his works and called it as 'the Book of the *šū'ālē*'<sup>21</sup>. 'Abdīšō' has made the following entry into his nomenclature which expands this short remark somewhat: 'Mīka'ēl composed the *šū'ālē* of the text of the Scripture in three volumes'<sup>22</sup>. This work must have had importance since the author appears as an authority in the hermeneutic traditions of the East Syrians. Some echoes of his contribution appear in a repertoire of the East Syrian exegesis where he is quoted very frequently<sup>23</sup>, in a commentary on the Psalms<sup>24</sup>, in the commentary composed by Iṣḥāq Šebadnāiā<sup>25</sup>, in the *Gannat būssāmē*<sup>26</sup>, and in Bar Bahlūl<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 512.

<sup>17</sup> Ms. Bagd. C, cah. 8, fol. 1a.

<sup>18</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 57, fol. 33a, 61a; Ms. Ming. syr. 58, fol. 11b.

<sup>19</sup> ŠELĒMŌN OF BĀSRĀ, *Liber apis*, p. 154. Another indication of his reputation is the fact that in the diptychs of later centuries he appears in the company of the great luminaries Narsai, Abraham and Jōhannān de-Bēt Rabban, FIEY, *Diptyques nestoriens*, p. 390.

<sup>20</sup> ܡܝܟܐܝܠ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܬܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ, SŪRĪN, *Mēmra de-abā-hātā*, p. 400<sup>8-9</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> ܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܡܝܟܐܝܠ *Liber apis*, p. 154.

<sup>22</sup> ܡܝܟܐܝܠ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ *Catalogus librorum*, LXXVI, p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 10b, 14b, 17a, 19a *et passim*.

<sup>24</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 58, fol. 17b.

<sup>25</sup> Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 11, fol. 6a, cah. 13, fol. 8b; Ms. Vat. syr. 592, fol. 49a, 62a; Ms. Ming. syr. 57, fol. 33a, 61a.

<sup>26</sup> Ms. Bagd. B, cah. 28, fol. 9a; Ms. Vat. syr. 494, fol. 421b; Ms. Manch. Ryl. syr. 41.

<sup>27</sup> *Lexicon syriacum*, I, col. 794.

Besides the exegetical terrain, Mika'el has proved his abilities in other areas. Tradition remembers him as an author of a work against the Jacobites<sup>28</sup> which certainly gave him opportunity to exercise theological arguments. Other kinds of works could be expected from an author who was characterized as a *mepašqānā* and a *badūqā*. Tradition ascribes to him a work on man as a microcosm<sup>29</sup> which seems to point in the direction of philosophy, and a work on dreams<sup>30</sup>. However the 'Book of Definitions'<sup>31</sup> bears his name without right, since its intrinsic evidence militates against this<sup>32</sup> and is ascribed in other manuscripts to someone else<sup>33</sup>.

The question whether a treatise on the cause of the festival of the Virgin Mary<sup>34</sup>, which once is quoted as that of Mika'el Badūqā<sup>35</sup>, can be ascribed to our author with certainty<sup>36</sup> must remain open. All the manuscripts of this cycle of texts do not wish to make this identification and bring this treatise forward anonymous<sup>37</sup>.

#### d. Abraham of Behqāwād

Abraham's home was in Behqāwād, in Bēt Arāmāiē. We are told that he first studied in his own country after which he went

<sup>28</sup> Ms. Seert 87, IIIe, 'Discussion du Docteur Michael contre les Jacobites', SCHER, *Catalogue*, p. 65.

<sup>29</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 4071, fol. 45b-59a; Ms. Ming. syr. 547, fol. 1b-10a; Ms. Ming. syr. 566, fol. 172b-175a, an anonymous work; Ms. Alqōš 65, cah. 1-2.

<sup>30</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 618, fol. 116b-119b.

<sup>31</sup> Ms. Bagd. C, cah. 6, fol. 1a-cah. 8, fol. 1a; Ms. Alqōš 65, cah. 5, fol. 1a-cah. 8, fol. 26a; Ms. Alqōš 291, cah. 3, fol. 1a-cah. 7, fol. 11a; Ms. Ming. syr. 547, fol. 20a-45a; Ms. Berl. orient. oct. 1132, fol. 127a-173a.


<sup>32</sup> In it the scholia of Theodoros bar Kōnī are quoted who flourished at the end of the 8th and at the beginning of the 9th century.

<sup>33</sup> It appears under the name of Bāzūd in Ms. Berl. Pet. 9, fol. 184a-207a. and Ms. India Office 9.

<sup>34</sup> Regarding the cycle of treatises see page 174.

<sup>35</sup> Namely by Ishāq Šebadnāiā.

<sup>36</sup> *Écrivains syriens*, p. 17.

<sup>37</sup>  'composed by one of the *badūqē* of the School of Nisibis'.

to Nisibis. He became a *malpānā* and remained at that school for a long time<sup>38</sup>.

Eventually for reasons he felt important, he left Nisibis and joined the community of Mār Abraham at the Monastery of ʾIzlā. This must have taken place before the year 588. This stay was of a temporary character — his heart longed for instruction. When opportunity presented itself he was able to return to Nisibis, but this time he went to another school which was set up as a rival to the place where ʾHenānā taught: 'And he became a *malpānā* in the School of Bēt Sahdē by the order of his *rabban*'<sup>39</sup>. If this *rabban* is Abraham as it seems and not the *rabban* of the School of Bēt Sahdē, then an interesting sidelight into the atmosphere in Nisibis and the grouping of forces prior to the battle is provided us. This Abraham fell victim to robbers<sup>40</sup>.

Nothing is known about Abraham's literary work. The possibility that he can be identified with Abraham Qaṭṭinā<sup>41</sup>, who was active in the literary field is a pure speculation.

#### e. Barḥadbešabbā

The possibility of identifying this Barḥadbešabbā with another of the same name<sup>42</sup> is not open to us. All we have in the literary data does not allow us to take this suggestion seriously.

We also must use circumspection in handling some data in our sources. Thus we do not know whether our Barḥadbešabbā is meant by the reference to a Barḥadbešabbā who left the school together with those in the exodus<sup>43</sup>. We therefore have reason to stay close to the data enclosed in his work and exploit it in our inquiry after the information regarding the person of this Barḥadbešabbā.

The author introduces himself as 'Barḥadbešabbā and the chief

<sup>38</sup> ܠܟܠܝܢ ܕܡܠܦܢܐ ܕܢܝܨܒܝܫ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ 'and he was a *malpānā* in Nisibis for a long time', ʾIŠŌ'DENAH, *Livre de la chasteté*, XLII, p. 26<sub>13</sub>.

<sup>39</sup> ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ *ibid.*, p. 26<sub>14-15</sub>.

<sup>40</sup> One day when he went to one of the farms (or fields) of the Monastery of ʾIzlā, a band of robbers killed him.

<sup>41</sup> BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte syr. Literatur*, p. 127.

<sup>42</sup> CHABOT, *Littérature syriaque*, p. 59.

<sup>43</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 511.

of the *badūqē* of the holy School of the town of Nisibis' <sup>44</sup>. So does he appear in the title of his work. The concluding statement of the work yields a bit more, expanding upon his functions in the school and including the reference to his home-land : 'Mār Barhadbešabbā 'Arbāiā, presbyter and *mepašqānā*' <sup>45</sup>.

We can take a step forward. Every good reason points in this direction that this Barḥadbešabbā is the same one whose writings have been registered by 'Abdišō'<sup>46</sup>. He also calls him Barḥadbešabbā 'Arbāiā. And what 'Abdišō' is able to tell us about his literary heritage seems to fit in with what we have already seen.

In the field of biblical hermeneutics ‘Abdišo’ lists two commentaries, that on Mark and that on the Psalms<sup>47</sup>. Both are lost. All that we have left are a few quotations which have found a place of refuge in a commentary on Psalms<sup>48</sup>, in Išo’dād of Merv<sup>49</sup> and in the *Gannat būssāmē*<sup>50</sup>.

What was contained in the 'Book of Treasures'<sup>51</sup>, which consisted of three volumes, and which leads the list of his writings as obviously the most important cannot be answered. The short quotation from this work which has survived<sup>52</sup>, is not sufficient to help us.

His writings reveal a strong historical interest. One is called '(Historia) ecclesiastica' <sup>53</sup>. This short title summarizes the content of the work with whose consultation we began our inquiry <sup>54</sup>. Its exact title is : 'History of the holy fathers, persecuted for the reason of truth' <sup>55</sup>. The other work of an historical kind is entitled the 'Cause of followers of Mār Diodor' <sup>56</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> כַּנְעַנִי מִצֵּדָה הָיָה בְּעֶמְקָא דְּחִיבִי וְהָיָה מִצֵּדָה דְּחִיבִי מִצֵּדָה דְּחִיבִי  
*Histoire*, II, p. 495.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 631. כו, כו עובדא דכחא דמזא דמזא

<sup>46</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, XCIII, p. 169.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>48</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 58, fol. 17b.

<sup>49</sup> *Commentaire*, I : *Genèse*, p. 81.

<sup>50</sup> Ms. Manch. Ryl. syr. 41.

<sup>51</sup> አብዱላክ ሐይማኖት, 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, p. 169.

<sup>52</sup> By Dadišō' Qatrāiā, see SCHER, *Oeuvres de Dadišo*, p. 106.

<sup>53</sup> ~~പ്രമാണങ്ങൾ~~, *Catalogus librorum*, p. 169.

<sup>54</sup> *Histoire*, II, p. 495 ff.

<sup>55</sup> እንደ ዚህ ልዩነትና ለጊዜ ለክፍል ስህተት *ibid.*, p. 495.

<sup>56</sup> መገናኛ፣ ከ ሕገወጪ፣ *Catalogus librorum*, p. 169.

That Barḥadbešabbā has contributed to the field of polemical theology may be surmised from another title : 'Disputations against all the sects and their refutation' <sup>57</sup>.

#### f. Qaššā

Nowhere in the literary sources does a ray of light fall upon this teacher <sup>58</sup>. However, in the authentic legislative texts emanating from the School of Nisibis he suddenly emerges. Here in the Statutes of Ḥenānā his name has been immortalized. When these were prepared and sanctioned, Mār Qaššā was a *magre'iānā* <sup>59</sup>. Thus in the year 590 he was in his office.

#### g. Ḥenānīšō

What was said about the preceding teacher is valid also for Ḥenānīšō. At that time the statutes of the school were established under Ḥenānā, in the year 590, Mār Ḥenānīšō was on the staff of the teachers. He is introduced as 'Mār Ḥenānīšō', presbyter and *mehage'iānā* <sup>60</sup>. Nothing in our source throws more light upon this teacher.

### 8. LIFE AND DISCIPLINE IN THE SCHOOL UNDER ḤENĀNĀ

Concerning admission procedures we already have had occasion to speak. As we have seen, the aspirants were submitted to selective screening <sup>1</sup> which was more thoroughgoing when the throng was greater and the facilities of the school were filled up to capacity. Certainly the story was different when its size shrunk, particularly during the period immediately after the exodus took place.

Studies were carried out under the surveillance of the administration of the school. The discipline exercised for this purpose was strict and vigilant. 'The brothers who are not found at the time... of reading and interpretation or group until they show an evident

<sup>57</sup> ܩܪܝܬܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ *ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>58</sup> *Statutes*, p. 92.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>1</sup> See page 270 f.

Evidently there was no tuition for the instruction in the school. Never is it mentioned or indicated. However the students had to take care of their maintenance in the school. They had to provide for their livelihood by their work during the time the school was in recess, using also other resources. Exceptions were made for students unable to work due to physical weakness or handicap. They had to report their situation to the *rabbaitā* whose responsibility it was to assist them insofar as that was possible. This was, of course, subject to the stipulation that they be students in good

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<sup>5</sup> Can. XV, *Statutes*, p. 98 f.

<sup>7</sup> See page 285 f.



respect the ordinance must reckon with the expulsion from the community and from the town <sup>15</sup>.

Something in the statutes helps us to get an idea about life in the precincts of the school. It was organized on the principle of togetherness <sup>16</sup>. Residence in the school was a prerequisite. As long as there were empty cells <sup>17</sup> available no one could be allowed to take a dwelling-place among the inhabitants of the town <sup>18</sup>. It was also not allowed to establish a dwelling elsewhere, separate from the community. No one had the right to leave the common dwelling-places to go and build a hut for himself : 'No one shall leave under the pretext of righteousness the dwelling-place with the brothers and go out and build for himself a hut outside the town or by the side of the town, but shall keep the lawful dwelling-place' <sup>19</sup>. The strength of this principle could not be invalidated by arguments drawn from the ideal of perfection : 'If he desires to excel he may go into a monastery or into the desert' <sup>20</sup>.

As in the case of dwelling, so with eating — it was communal <sup>21</sup>. No one was allowed to take the bread <sup>22</sup> for another <sup>23</sup>.

However, one segment of students was kept separate from the rest of the community. These were the students in the department of medicine. Much in this respect remains unknown. There is no information about the time when this department was opened. In the texts we have, it emerges as a part in the life of the school but in such a way that the students from both departments were not

<sup>15</sup> Can. XIV, *ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>16</sup> Can. IX, *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> مَلْتَمَح = κέλλα.

<sup>18</sup> Can. II, *ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>19</sup> لا يَحْفَظُ هُوَ وَتَلْمِذَتُهُ كَمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلْ حَمِيكُ وَحَمِيكُ كَتَمَ وَتَلْمِذَتُهُ كَتَمَ  
لَمْ يَحْفَظْ لِحْجَ بَعْضِ تَلْمِذَتِهِ. كَمَا لَمْ يَحْفَظْ. كَمَا لَمْ يَحْفَظْ. كَمَا لَمْ يَحْفَظْ  
can. IV, *ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>20</sup> Can. IV, *ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>21</sup> Can. IX, *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>22</sup> Can. III, *ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>23</sup> Here the Arabic version is different. Instead of this sentence the Arabic text reads:  
وليس لاحد من الاسكوليين ان يقضى حاجة ولا ان اعتمد في ذلك الاجر

'no one of the students is allowed to perform work and demand remuneration for it',  
IBN AT-TA'IYIB, *Fiqh an-naṣrāniya*, p. 166.



the purpose and the manner<sup>29</sup> of their *qeiāmā*<sup>30</sup>. This statement indicates that the community was compared with an ascetic institution of venerable age<sup>31</sup>, being considered as a semi-monastic community. Some restrictions requiring stronger formulation are included into the ordinances. Participation in social affairs in the town was strictly forbidden without permission from the *rabbaitā*<sup>32</sup>. One rule is very explicit. According to this the brothers, as long as they are at the school, shall not eat in the taverns and restaurants, and shall also not arrange picnics<sup>33</sup> and drinking parties<sup>34</sup> in the gardens and parks<sup>35</sup>.

Restrictions upon the contacts with women were carried out with particular vehemency. Talk and prolonged conversation with women was regarded an offence which besmirched the reputation of the community and of the school <sup>36</sup>. The requirement was so adamant that it left no leeway for such contacts in the instructional situation: 'No one of the brothers of the school is allowed to teach the women, the *benat qeāmā* <sup>37</sup> from the town or outside the town under the pretext of light cause' <sup>38</sup>. In either case, the punishment for trespassing is the same — expulsion from the community and the town.

The special status of the students found expression also in regard to appropriate manner of dress, habit and appearance : 'Along with learning, the brothers of the school shall be diligent also over the *'eskīmā*<sup>39</sup> of dress and hair : they should not shave entirely<sup>40</sup>, also they shall not grow curls<sup>41</sup> like the seculars but

<sup>29</sup> κῶσκ = σχῆμα.

<sup>30</sup> ḥayyānā ḥayyānā ḥayyānā : ḥayyānā ḥayyānā ḥayyānā  
ḥayyānā can. XVI, *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>31</sup> VÖÖBUS, *History of Asceticism*, I, p. 172 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Namely the vigils and the commemoration meals, can. XIII, *Statutes*, p. 97 f.

<sup>33</sup> κζαω = σύμβολα.

<sup>34</sup> Lit. 'mixed drinks'.

<sup>35</sup> Can. XVI, *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>36</sup> Can. XVIII, *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>37</sup> About this order see VÖÖBUS, *Institution of the benai geiāmā*, p. 19 ff.

<sup>38</sup> کچھ کے کہنے پر وہ عدالت کے قضاے میں جہاد کی ضرورت کو تسلیم کر لیا۔  
can. XVIII, Statutes, p. 100. جہاد کی ضرورت کو تسلیم کرنے اور اس کے لئے اقدامات اٹھانے کے بارے میں

<sup>39</sup> κλωκ = σχῆμα.

<sup>40</sup> This is a reference to the form of tonsure.

<sup>41</sup> The Arabic version reads : **ولا يربون اصداغا** 'and they shall not grow

they shall go about within the school and on the streets of the town in chaste tonsure and dignified dress that is far from luxury' <sup>42</sup>.

The task of carrying out discipline in studies, in cultic obligations and in the observance of the regulations for life in the community was of essential importance. The problem of surveillance was resolved in such a way that assistants were appointed to the staff of the teachers and the *rabbaitā*. An interesting facet of light is shed upon this institution in one of the rules. It deals with the students who are not present in the vigils or at the time of study and during choir-practice. In this connection, the text reads: 'These shall be sought out by the heads of the cells or by the *rabbaitā* of the school if they do not obey the heads of the cells' <sup>43</sup>. These 'heads of the cells' obviously represented the lowest rank in the scale of officers in the system of surveillance created to maintain order and discipline. We hear nothing about this institution elsewhere. The only avenue left us is the derivation of its meaning from the name. These functionaries obviously did not enjoy great authority for the possibility that they would not always receive obedience from their subordinates and then not be able to enforce the rules is considered. This indicates that these 'heads of the cells' were not teachers but persons elected from the student body.

The penal code is insufficiently presented in these texts. Only some aspects of it are reflected here. Once we learn of such 'a correction' before the entire school <sup>44</sup>. This is the punishment for neglect of religious duties. For more serious offenses suspension was the sentence <sup>45</sup>. Grave trespasses earned excommunication <sup>46</sup>, expulsion from the school <sup>47</sup> and expulsion from the school and the town <sup>48</sup>. One rule even regulates the funeral rite for students not in good standing <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Can. XVII, *Statutes*, p. 87 f.

<sup>43</sup> ܐܝܬܐ ܕܪܒܝܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ : ܡܠܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ can. V, *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>44</sup> Can. XI, *ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>45</sup> As punishment for attending vigils and commemoration meals in the town, can. XIII, *ibid.*, p. 97 f.

<sup>46</sup> Can. XII, *ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>47</sup> Can. II, *ibid.*, p. 96, 98, 100.

<sup>48</sup> Can. VIII, XIV, XVIII, *ibid.*, p. 96, 98, 100.

<sup>49</sup> The honor that shall be shown to him shall not be the same as that given to others,

The regulations for study, life and behavior include one rule which was found necessary due to occurrences which caused trouble for the administration of the school. The last canon which forbids the students to offer any aid to the prisoners and escaped slaves, was obviously designed for the protection of the school : 'No one from the brothers of the school shall dare to shelter the captives under the pretext of righteousness or to help the slaves to flee from their masters, in order that no occasion of harm would be for the holy community' <sup>50</sup>.

The activity of the students during the interims between school sessions, was also the concern of the administration. One matter has been taken up and included in the statutes. Apparently, there were reasons for concern about the spirit of competition which so often flared up among the students who frequently felt themselves not able to keep their own agreements <sup>51</sup>.

#### 9. THE IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL IN THE LIGHT OF SOME OF ITS ALUMNI

Our idea regarding the rôle and the impact of the School of Nisibis will gain some concreteness if we try it in the light of the activities and interests of some of its alumni who can be called upon as witnesses. In their aspirations, contribution and activities, we may hope to sense something of the spirit that has animated the inmates of this institution.

##### a. Bābai Rabā

In this respect the most interesting case is that of Mār Bābai — the most celebrated among the alumni. His authority and reputation in the area of literary culture was immense. The church gratefully gave him the epithet Rabbā 'the Great'.

Bābai was of the village of Bēt 'Ainātā in Bēt Zabdai and came from a well-to-do family <sup>1</sup>. This situation allowed him to pursue

but it shall be a little more than that given to secular people; this is contingent upon the *rabbaitā's* approval, can, VI, *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>50</sup> Can. XXI, *ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>51</sup> Can. X, *ibid.*, p. 96 f.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. India Off. Loth 1050.

his studies as he liked. For 15 years he absorbed knowledge in the School of Nisibis<sup>2</sup>. Then he developed his instruction at the xenodochion in Nisibis<sup>3</sup>. Later he decided to change to a life in monasticism. He entered the monastery which was destined to become the scene of his activities, the Monastery of Īzlā, under the leadership of Abraham. Then he founded his own monastery in his home country on the grounds of his well-to-do parents adding a significant school to it<sup>4</sup>. However his first monastery, that on the Mount of Īzlā drew him back. After the death of the Abbot Dadīšō' in 604, the leadership of the community fell on his shoulders.

Bābai was a very prolific writer. In fact, his production was enormous. The tradition ascribes to him 83<sup>5</sup> or 84<sup>6</sup> volumes which contained the fruits of his labors in various fields. In his person, the impact of the school is seen at its best.

A real outburst of literature appeared with him.

He is reported to have produced exegetical works on all the books of the Scriptures<sup>7</sup>. None have survived.

In the theological field, the most important work is devoted to christology which is an explication of the Nestorian dogmatic position<sup>8</sup>. A collection of the evidence for his dogmatic position gathered from the Greek and Syriac fathers<sup>9</sup>, has not survived. His theological works written against a number of the representatives of heterodox tenets<sup>10</sup> have suffered the same fate.

But his commentaries on mystical themes have survived the vicissitudes of centuries. One of them is the commentary on the

<sup>2</sup> Īšō'DENAH, *Livre de la chasteté*, XXXIX, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25a.

<sup>4</sup> Īšō'denah says that it was a great monastery and a grand school, *ibid.*, p. 2511-12.

<sup>5</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LXVI, p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> THOMAS OF MARGĀ, *Historia monastica*, I, 28, p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> *Liber de unione*, p. 1 ff. Cf. also Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 5441, fol. 1b-206b; orient. 9370, fol. 1b-151a.

<sup>9</sup> كتاب جمع فيه دلائل من كتب الاباء المحققين اليونانيين والسريانيين على

سبيل الجدل 'a book of collection of the witnesses derived from the orthodox fathers,

Greek and Syriac, for the controversy', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 534.

<sup>10</sup> Namely works directed against the *meṣaliānē*, Jōhannān of Edessa, Mōšē, Aksenāiā as well as against Justinian, Marqos and Išai of Taḥal, *ibid.*, p. 532 ff.

Centuria of Euagrios Ponticos<sup>11</sup> and the other on the treatises of Marqos on the spiritual law<sup>12</sup> which has suffered much. It certainly belongs to Bābai<sup>13</sup>. A similar writing on the letter of Jōhannān Ḥazzāiā<sup>14</sup> is lost.

Of the writings ascetic in character, the work for the novices<sup>15</sup> has perished. The canons for monastic life have been salvaged in an Arabic translation<sup>16</sup>. His principal work on the foundations of ascetic life, 'On the life of excellency', has escaped the fate of his other writings<sup>17</sup>.

One field that exercised great attraction upon Bābai belongs to the historical regions. It manifests a great variety, although most of the works mentioned exist only by title. Certainly other elements were involved in these writings but the common denominator in his interest is historiography. Concerning his work on Diodor and his companions<sup>18</sup> we can only guess, but exponents from a similar genre in the area of hagiography give us an idea. The story of Martyr Gīwargī is extant<sup>19</sup> as well as that of Martyr Kristīnā<sup>20</sup>. The rest is lost<sup>21</sup>. His biography of Grīgōr, Metropolitan of Nisibis<sup>22</sup>, is lost as are the other writings which belong in the same category. In this area of productivity his heart belonged to the monastico-historical sector, none of this however has survived.

<sup>11</sup> *Evagrius Pontikus*, p. 8 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 17,270, fol. 1a-42b.

<sup>13</sup> Fol. 40a bears Bābai's name as the author. Wright's suspicion that it may have been written by Abraham bar Dāšandād, *Catalogue*, II, p. 482, is not justified.

<sup>14</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 533, not Jāusep Ḥazzāiā, as in 'Abdīšō', *Catalogus librorum*, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> ܠܐܝܬܐ ܠܡܢܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܐܕܝܫܐ 'the book in which was laid down the order for the novices', DADĪŠŌ' QATRAIĀ, Ms. Seert 74, see SCHER, *Vie de Dadišō Qatraia*, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> Ms. Vat. arab. 153, fol. 192a-192b; see *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, p. 178 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Ms. Bagd. 6033, fol. 14b-49a; Ms. Alqōš 247, cah. 2, fol. 10b-cah. 6, fol. 4a; Ms. Vat. syr. 592, fol. 8b-26b; Ms. Šarf. Patr. 80, fol. 33a-53a.

<sup>18</sup> ܘܬܝܪܝܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ ܕܕܝܕܝܐ 'History of the Followers of Diodor', *Catalogus librorum*, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> *Taš'itā de-Mār Gīwargīs*, p. 416 ff.

<sup>20</sup> *Sahdūtā de-Kristīnā*, p. 201 ff.

<sup>21</sup> The biography of Abimelek is mentioned by the author himself, *Taš'itā de-Mār Gīwargīs*, p. 427.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.

'Abdīšō' included some of them in his nomenclature<sup>23</sup>. Bābai himself testifies that he produced a large number of such biographies<sup>24</sup>.

Also the field of liturgy received contribution from Bābai<sup>25</sup>.

We learn of the abilities of Bābai in a chapter devoted to him by Thomas of Margā<sup>26</sup>. His reputation, owing to his learning, literary creation and sanctity of life had no rival among the contemporary authorities. In the public opinion of Christianity, he was a very highly respected figure. This is illustrated by the fact that at the time when, under Khosrau, the election of a new head for the church was rendered impossible, the metropolitans of Nisibis, Hadiab and Karkā de-Bēt Selōk by joint action furnished him with authority to act as an inspector-general of the monasteries. He was thus enabled to carry out his task of visitation<sup>27</sup> without any outside suspicion that a new head had been elected for the church. He performed the entrusted task so well that upon the death of Khosrau, when the opportunity presented itself to elect a catholicos under the rule of Sheroe, the choice fell upon him. But Bābai declined. Soon after this he died in 627/28.

#### b. Nātni'el of Sirzōr

The scanty data about Nātni'el have suffered much<sup>28</sup> and created confusion<sup>29</sup>. It is known that he was of Sirzōr. He took his theological studies at the School of Nisibis<sup>30</sup>. The flow of our scanty

<sup>23</sup> Those of Mattai, Abraham of Nisibis — certainly Abraham of Kaškar — and Gabri'el Qatrāiā, *Catalogus librorum*, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup> He says that that of Abraham of Kaskar was the first, which was followed by others on Dadišō', Jōhannān of Margā, a priest, Rāmīšō' of Kaškar, on all the brothers in the community of Izlā, Išo'sabran of Karkā de-Bēt Selōk, Jōhannān the Arab of Ĥirtā and Dani'el of Babel, *Taš'itā de-Mār Giwargis*, p. 424 ff.

<sup>25</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, p. 95, 97.

<sup>26</sup> *Historia monastica*, I, 27, p. 51 f.

<sup>27</sup> This undertaking was necessitated by the infiltration of heterodox elements into the monastic communities which had taken alarming dimensions, *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 23 f.

<sup>28</sup> The text has a lacuna here so that his name does not appear in the chapter about him, Išo'DENAḤ, *Livre de la chasteté*, LXVI, p. 39. However it appears in a metrical epitome in Ms. Berl. Sach. 188, fol. 221b.

<sup>29</sup> Assemani has identified him with Nātni'el, a monk in the Monastery of Bēt 'Ābē who lived under Catholicos Ḥenānīšō' I, (686-700), *Bibliotheca orientalis*, III, 1, p. 224.

<sup>30</sup> Išo'DENAḤ, *Livre de la chasteté*, p. 39.

information stops for a longer period throughout which we have but a few very general remarks. We are told that he spent the period following his studies on scholarly work and literary creation. He is even introduced as a *mepašqānā* <sup>31</sup>. It is very regrettable that we do not know where he exercised the function of an interpreter. In another source, he appears as a doctor <sup>32</sup>.

Information about his literary creation is in no better condition. Despite that, at least some data have come down to us. His commentary on the Psalter seems to have been the most outstanding of his writings. It was widely known. It is mentioned by ʾĪšō'denaḥ and registered in the catalog of the works by 'Abdīšō' <sup>33</sup>. An excerpt has survived of a work called 'The Cause of the Psalms' <sup>34</sup>. However, this exegetical work on the Psalter cannot have been the only exegetical work. Some traces of a similar work on the Pentateuch <sup>35</sup> indicate that our information is very deficient. Polemical theology also has found cultivation at his hands. Tradition mentions a polemical work directed against the Mazda-believers <sup>36</sup>. 'Abdīšō' knew a number of similar works directed against the Severians, Manichees, Kantaeans and Madaeans (?) <sup>37</sup>.

Later Nātni'ēl was elevated to the bishopric of Sirzōr. In fact, his name appears among the subscriptions to the synodical acts held under the Catholicos ʾĪšō'iahb I in the year 585 <sup>38</sup> and among those held under Catholicos Grīgōr in the year 605 <sup>39</sup>. He was killed under Khosrau <sup>40</sup>, i.e. before 628 <sup>41</sup>. We hear that he was imprisoned for 6 years in reprisal <sup>42</sup> and then crucified <sup>43</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 42a, 45a; cf. Ms. Bagd. D, fol. 1b, 4a.

<sup>33</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, CLIV, p. 224.

<sup>34</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 58, fol. 15b-16b.

<sup>35</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 553, fol. 42a, 45a.

<sup>36</sup> ʾĪšō'denaḥ, *Livre de la chasteté*, p. 39.

<sup>37</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, p. 224.

<sup>38</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 164.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>40</sup> See a historical note in Ms. Bagd. 215, fol. 1b.

<sup>41</sup> *Livre de la chasteté*, p. 39; *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 520.

<sup>42</sup> The Persian commander had destroyed the churches in the town and the Christians under the leadership of their bishop had expelled him, *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 21.

<sup>43</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 58, fol. 15b says that he did this together with 12 other bishops.



recension of the last part<sup>53</sup> of it has been preserved by a singular codex in the Orient<sup>54</sup>. It is a lengthy document that traces the theme throughout biblical history and finally reaches the part which is of real interest to us, namely, the major events in the School of Edessa and that of Nisibis.

Now let us move on with circumspection and see what can be learned about its author from the document itself.

The author states that he studied in the School of Nisibis and was a disciple of Henānā<sup>55</sup>. He also says that he composed his work at that time Henānā was in the office<sup>56</sup>. Still more can be learned. He must have composed this work at some time prior to the battle which enveloped Henānā erupted<sup>57</sup>. But this must have been a period after ʾIšōʾiahb, the former director and bishop of Arzūn became catholicos<sup>58</sup>, i.e. after the year 581 when this election took place<sup>59</sup>. How far we can proceed from this date, is not clear. In any case not beyond the time when Grīgōr took over the seat of the metropolitan of Nisibis<sup>60</sup>.

Can we learn more about this Barḥadbešabbā?

First of all a clue is given to us by ʾAbdīšō who in enumerating the works of Barḥadbešabbā ʾArbāiā, does not mention the work about the foundation of the schools<sup>61</sup>. The work is not connected with Barḥadbešabbā ʾArbāiā.

The confusion that mixes up our author with Barḥadbešabbā ʾArbāiā reaches back as far as we can see in the transmission of this work. ʾArbāiā appears in the manuscript in Seert<sup>62</sup> and in that in Alqōš<sup>63</sup>. So, too, in another recension<sup>64</sup>. Thus no text has escaped the spell of this disarray and confusion<sup>65</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> *Integra narratio*, p. 38 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Mingana does not give a satisfactory description of the manuscript.

<sup>55</sup> *Fondation des écoles*, p. 332 f., cf. p. 393.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>57</sup> His eulogy, *ibid.*, p. 392, does not reveal a shadow of awareness regarding the trials.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390.

<sup>59</sup> In the fourth year of Hormizd IV, ELIĀ BAR ŠĪNĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, p. 52.

<sup>60</sup> See page 304.

<sup>61</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, XCIII, p. 169.

<sup>62</sup> Ms. Seert 109, fol. 25b, see SCHER, *Catalogue*, p. 77.

<sup>63</sup> Ms. Alqōš 65, cah. 17, fol. 15a.

<sup>64</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 547, fol. 69b.

<sup>65</sup> In Ms. Seert 82, fol. 302a the title, as quoted in SCHER, *Catalogue*, p. 62 shows

It seems that this foreign element has not entirely suppressed the authentic information but stands amicably side by side with it — namely that this Barḥadbešabbā was of Ḥolwān. If we can trust this, then this Barḥadbešabbā can be identified with the bishop Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān whose name emerges in the subscriptions to the synodical acts held under Catholicos Grīgōr, in the year 605<sup>66</sup>. This is very probable. If, indeed, there is no eventual miscalculation in these considerations, then we can conclude that we have to see in this Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān an author who has enjoyed a great reputation and esteem in the area of literary culture. A reference to his celebrity in literary creation appears in a document that has deemed it worthy to register this fact among other scanty data<sup>67</sup>. But in regard to further literary accomplishments which have contributed to his fame we must admit ignorance.

#### d. ʾĪšōʾiahb of Gedālā

ʾĪšōʾiahb originated from Gedālā in Bet ʾArbāiē. His education and theological training were received at the School of Nisibis. These studies ended with the time of crisis and he was one of those who took part in the exodus. The only information available about the period that followed this incident is that he worked as a teacher in the school in Bālād<sup>68</sup>.

His literary work exhibits a manifold character. Of his exegetical work, the most important seems to have been his commentary on the Psalter<sup>69</sup> which is lost. The same fate has struck down his works in the field of hagiography<sup>70</sup> and the *mēmre* on various subjects<sup>71</sup>. Of his letters at least one has survived in the original<sup>72</sup> and another in Arabic translation<sup>73</sup>.

ʾBarḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān'. Apparently he has not reproduced the complete text here, since in the edition he prints also 'ʾArbāiā', see *Fondation des écoles*, p. 327.

<sup>66</sup> *Synodicon orientale*, p. 214.

<sup>67</sup> *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 554.

<sup>69</sup> 'ʾABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LXXI, p. 105.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>72</sup> This letter is of dogmatic content, written to Abraham of Bēt Mādai, in Ms. Vat. syr. 587, fol. 31a-39a; Ms. Vat. syr. 599, fol. 19b-33b; Ms. Borg. syr. 82, fol. 592-615; Ms. Ming. syr. 47, fol. 232b-238b; Ms. Ming. syr. 586, fol. 311a, 324a.

<sup>73</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 576-579.

His ecclesiastical career brought him the highest honors. He was elevated to the bishopric of Bālād. In 628, he was elected catholicos. As such he led the delegation of prelates appointed by Sheroe into the negotiations with Emperor Heraclius<sup>74</sup>. The symbol he handed over to the Byzantine authorities<sup>75</sup> won communion with the Greek church<sup>76</sup> but caused criticism and disparagement at home<sup>77</sup> so that he had to come out in his own defence<sup>78</sup>. Tradition reports his foresight in making an agreement with the invading Arabs<sup>79</sup>.

His rule lasted to 644/46.

#### e. Īšō'iahb of Ḥadiab

Īšō'iahb, a son of a well-to-do Persian Baštūhmāg in Kūplānā, in Ḥadiab, was already a disciple of Ja'qōb in the Monastery of Bēt 'Ābē<sup>80</sup> when he began his theological training in the School of Nisibis. How long he studied there is not known, but we do know that it ended with the exodus.

His literary life was devoted to various interests. It seems that his forte belonged in the area of polemical theology. His 'Refutation of Opinions'<sup>81</sup> was his best known work. It is lost, but we learn that it was directed against the adherents of Ḥenānā<sup>82</sup>. His own testimony regarding this is at our disposal<sup>83</sup>. Besides this, he wrote another similar work, 'Disputations against the Heterodox Movements'<sup>84</sup>.

Of his interest in the historical field, we have an exponent in a biography he wrote about Īšō'sabran, who was killed as martyr in 620<sup>85</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, II, 4, p. 69 f.

<sup>75</sup> 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 53 f.

<sup>76</sup> *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 30.

<sup>77</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 560.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 576-579.

<sup>79</sup> See such a text which in the present form hardly can claim authority, *ibid.*, p. 601-610.

<sup>80</sup> THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, II, 4, p. 69.

<sup>81</sup> ܐܒܕܝܫܐ ܐܒܕܝܫܐ 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LXXIV, p. 137.

<sup>82</sup> THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, IV, 25, p. 251.

<sup>83</sup> *Liber epistularum*, p. 133 f.

<sup>84</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, p. 137.

<sup>85</sup> *Histoire d'Īšosabran*, p. 485 ff.

In the area of monastic literature, he produced a parenetical work about initiation into the beginning in the ascetic life<sup>86</sup>, but in the field of practical religion, a collection of *mēmre*<sup>87</sup> and funeral sermons<sup>88</sup> were particularly celebrated<sup>89</sup>.

Particularly fruitful was his literary creation in the area of the liturgy. He arranged the service book<sup>90</sup> for the Sundays of the whole year. He also drew up the offices of baptism<sup>91</sup>, absolution<sup>92</sup>, ordination<sup>93</sup> and consecration<sup>94</sup>.

The same genre was also enriched by his *madrāšē* and *‘ūnātā*<sup>95</sup>. All this has become a part of the liturgical manuals in the Nestorian church. To the same genre belongs a collection of the *šū’ālē*<sup>96</sup>.

The corpus of his letters<sup>97</sup>, arranged according to the phases in the scale of his hierarchical career, as bishop, metropolitan and catholicos, is a very valuable historical source.

As has already been said, he passed through all the highest degrees in ecclesiastical leadership. He was elevated to the bishopric of Ninive-Mošul by Išo’iahb II. Soon he rose to the seat of the metropolitan of Arbēl. Then in 650/51<sup>98</sup> or even in 647/8<sup>99</sup> the direction of the church was entrusted into his hands. The expectations which were called forth from him, in fact, were fulfilled. He tackled the problems with courage and resolution. His abilities

<sup>86</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, p. 138.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>88</sup> ܡܡܪܝܢ ܒܝܬܐ ܝܠܕܐ, *ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>89</sup> ܡܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ, ‘which are very elegant’; see also ‘AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 56.

<sup>90</sup> ܡܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ‘the volume of the *hūdā*’, *Catalogus librorum*, p. 139.

<sup>91</sup> ܡܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ Ms. Alqōš 109, cah. 1-2; Ms. Ming. syr. 604, fol. 122b-161a; cf. ritual and prayers in Ms. Alqōš 92, cah. 9, fol. 10b-cah. 13, fol. 4b; Ms. Berl. orient. oct. 1070, fol. 102a-121a; Ms. Par. syr. 283, fol. 74a-97a.

<sup>92</sup> ܡܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ Ms. Alqōš 92, cah. 13, fol. 4a-cah. 14, fol. 3a; Ms. Berl. orient. oct. 1070, fol. 79b-84b; Ms. Par. syr. 283, fol. 97a-103a.

<sup>93</sup> Ms. Alqōš 110 in a volume which contains contributions made by Quprianos, metropolitan of Nisibis, Mār Išo’iahb and Mār Isra’ēl.

<sup>94</sup> *Catalogus librorum*, p. 140.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>96</sup> Namely a cycle of 58 *šū’ālē* of liturgical nature, Ms. Alqōš 176, cah. 5, fol. 4-cah. 6, fol. 20; Ms. Ming. syr. 566, fol. 46a-66b. See VÖÖBUS, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, I, 8.

<sup>97</sup> *Liber epistularum*, p. 1 ff.

<sup>98</sup> ‘AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 56.

<sup>99</sup> ELIĀ BAR ŠINĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, p. 54.

were proven best in his handling of the separatist movement on the part of the eparchy of Persis, a perennial tendency which haunted the unity of the Nestorian church. ʾĪšō'iahb was able to overcome a serious dispute with the metropolitan, bishops and monks of Persia and Qaṭar<sup>100</sup> and to heal the rift<sup>101</sup>.

Even as catholicos, he manifested his interest in the creation of facilities for educational purposes. What he attempted to do in the Monastery of Bēt 'Ābē is very instructive for our purpose: 'He wished to build a school near his cell to provide it with all that was necessary, and to bring to it *malpānē* and *badūqē* and *mepašqānē*, and to gather together many scholars and to provide for them in all things... that for every child who was trained and instructed therein the monastery might be near at hand for the purpose of attracting them as disciples, so that the school and the monastery might become one — the school to give birth to and to rear scholars, and the monastery to teach and sanctify them for the labor of the ascetic life'<sup>102</sup>. His endeavors, however, to carry out his far-reaching plans in this monastery were obstructed by the selfishness of the monks who did not want to sacrifice their quietness for the 'uproar and noise'. However, he was able to carry out his plan in his home country Kūplānā<sup>103</sup>.

ʾĪšō'iahb died in the year 657/8.

#### 10. THE BEGINNING OF TRIAL

What we can read directly from the sources — and between the lines — encourages us to think that Ḥenānā's views, if not developed gradually, were at least so presented that his sentiments were increasingly made known to the public in strength and power. The build up in trouble and conflict signifies as much.

The first tremors of reaction were ominous harbingers of the earthquake to come. By ignoring them the course of events swept him into ever greater difficulty. So deeply did he enmesh himself

<sup>100</sup> *Liber epistularum*, p. 260 ff.

<sup>101</sup> He won Metropolitan Šem'ōn of Rēv Ardāšīr and the ties of this diocese were tightened with the catholicate.

<sup>102</sup> THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, II, 7, p. 74.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

that this maelstrom shadowed him all his life. It necessarily involved him personally. But it had effects much more far-reaching. For these troubles involved his work at the school and the function of the entire institution. He dragged the whole school into the arena of strife with his interminable quarreling. The reputation of this center of learning, which had taken the work of all his predecessors to build it up was damaged by him.

Barḥadbešabbā of Ḥolwān, as we have already seen<sup>1</sup>, includes some references in his report about the battles and struggles Ḥenānā had to experience. The following examination of our sources will help us in providing some concreteness to these happenings indicated by way of implication. We can construct a framework for the historical events within which the actions, having a direct bearing upon the fate of the School of Nisibis, occurred. This skeletal framework seems clear but we cannot interlock every important action with desirable precision and are therefore forced to leave many of them in the shadows.

Suspensions about Ḥenānā had risen earlier. The attempts to neutralize misgivings, and the steps taken inspired as it seems by apprehension<sup>2</sup>, did not, and probably could not, fulfil expectations. Ḥenānā's character was too mercurial to read the signs. While the pre-history of the steadily growing controversy remains unknown to us, it is right for us to assume that there was much agitation before the issue left the sphere of rumors, gossips and intrigues to become a matter of official action. The heavily laden atmosphere ignited. The convocation under Catholicos Ḥšō'iahb in the year 585 A.D. put the matter on the agenda. We have an authentic account of these deliberations on Ḥenānā and his cohorts: 'It is reported also now before the synod that at this time men have appeared who are called by name orthodox, however, in their importunity they are disturbers of the orthodoxy, of the teachings and the traditions of the church, and are fighting with an adverse but powerless strength against the enormous power of the doctrines of the truth, which by the assistance of the Grace are piled

<sup>1</sup> See page 237.

<sup>2</sup> See page 264 ff.

up and put into the writings and traditions of the Interpreter'<sup>3</sup>.

The issue was deemed so grave that an action in the form of a condemnation was felt necessary : 'Whoever dares, in secrecy or in public, to be against that which has been said and written by us above, shall be anathematized and foreign from all the ecclesiastical communities' <sup>4</sup>.

Whether this decision was expected or not, it must have been a real blow to Ḥenānā and his adherents. An undisguised signal from high places was given, sounding a loud warning that something very dear to the ecclesiastical tradition was in acute danger. It provided an 'open sesame' for the anti-Ḥenānā forces to get on the move.

Here the curtain falls! Nothing is recorded about the impact and effect of the decision, considered by the bishops as most urgent, judging from the position of the canon in the cycle of other canons. We are left to imagine that this blackout must have involved acute trouble precipitating the School of Nisibis into deeper entanglements and disrupting its day to day work. That we are calculating rightly is indicated in a document that leads us directly into the compound of the School of Nisibis. This is a cycle of rules set up in the year 590 A.D.<sup>5</sup> — school conditions were so chaotic that the community had to be placed under regulation. Echoes of the atmosphere are audible in this document. The rumble of discontent charged to administrative mismanagement<sup>6</sup> and the disorder among the students beats a steady rhythm. If the severest of the penalties can be taken as a guide, we can lay our finger upon some

[illegible]

4 נאמר ונחיצה בבעיה אם צילם לחמור למשל מלפניו וכן לכל  
נחיצה במבט מן המרחק ונחיצה מן המרחק חסרת חשיבות  
*ibid.*, p. 138<sup>12-13</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> See page 269.

<sup>a</sup> It seems that the welfare of the students had suffered. It is possible that some regulations regarding the duties of the *rabbaitā* echo some of these difficulties, cf. can. I and III, *Statutes*, p. 92 f., 93 f.

of the problems — a bellicose participation in worship and studies<sup>7</sup>, questionable handling of the property of the school<sup>8</sup>, rebellious and arbitrary activities by the students<sup>9</sup>, and the collapse of discipline<sup>10</sup>. The language is clear enough. The impact of this decision shifted the controversy to the community of the school — the School of Nisibis had become a theater of grave disorder.

The action of the convocation was only the first installment. A short note that the same Īšō'iahb condemned the writings of Īenānā has escaped the curtain of silence while the burden of this information rests entirely upon the Chronicle of Seert<sup>11</sup>. It is *prima facie* evidence within the realm of possibility. If this action really took place, it also means that the course for the future was set and that both parties had committed themselves to the struggle. How soon the situation deteriorated cannot be determined. The most probable period would appear to have been soon after the promulgation of the statutes in 590 A.D. However, there is a possibility that what our witness reports is a confusion with the decision found in the synodical acts. Our knowledge is not sufficient either to affirm or to deny the validity of the information in question.

#### 11. MOUNTING DIFFICULTIES

Whatever the case may have been, we leave the realm of uncertainty and move into the light of history with the election of a catholicos to succeed Īšō'iahb, namely Sabrišō', an alumnus of the School of Nisibis<sup>1</sup>. The synod held under the new catholicos

<sup>7</sup> Can. V, *ibid.*, p. 94.f.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the protection of the books, see can. VIII, *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> Students had arranged elementary instruction in Nisibis at their own discretion, can. XII, *ibid.*, 97; begging from the believers under the pretext that they were authorized for this by the director or the *rabbaitā*, must have caused much concern since expulsion is introduced as punishment for this transgression, can. XIV, *ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>10</sup> Leaving the school, visiting the town and taking part in vigils and commemoration meals there without permission led to expulsion, can. XIII, *ibid.*, p. 97 f.

<sup>11</sup> *وقد كان ايشوعيب حرم كتبه عند وقفه عليها* 'already Īšō'iahb had condemned his books as soon as he had knowledge of them', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 430<sub>1-2</sub>.

<sup>1</sup> PETROS, *Taš'ūā de-Mār Sabrišō'*, p. 291.

made its decision and clothed it in an anathema. A report so outstanding and authentic deserves to be reproduced in full : 'We reject and anathematize also all those who reject the expositions, traditions and teachings of the tested doctor, the blessed Theodore, the Interpreter, who try to introduce new and foreign traditions full of fiction and blasphemy, and rise against the true and exact teaching of that saint and of all the true doctors, the masters of the schools who have walked in his vestiges'<sup>2</sup>.

The decree was adopted at the convocation which took place in 596 A.D. Its significance must be weighed for it prompts us to conclude that the work of the school must have seriously been disturbed, causing new tension among the teachers themselves on the one hand and the students on the other. Ḥenānā's literary works immediately became an object of contention and the quarrels threatened to develop a very serious crisis in the church at large — a crisis which was the more deplorable because since the enthronement of Khosrau Parvez in 590 a new era had been inaugurated for the fostering of church life<sup>3</sup>. Ḥenānā, however, did not consider the cost of the consequences. He maintained his adamant attitude inaugurating a period of strife and battle to the delight of the adversaries of the Nestorian persuasion.

Meanwhile the shock waves were becoming stronger. It seems that Henānā and the School of Nisibis had up to this time been spared pressure from the local prelate, the metropolitan of Nisibis. In 590 Metropolitan Šem'ōn still spoke of him in honorable terms<sup>4</sup>.

[illegible]

<sup>3</sup> He gave his permission to erect cult-buildings wherever Christians wished to build, AL-THA'ALIBĪ, *Histoire*, p. 671. The sources speak of a vigorous building-activity that took place at that time, cf. PEṬROS, *Taš'ti'ā de-Mār Sabrišō'*, p. 206 f. Particularly outstanding is the rôle of Jazdīn, a Christian dignitary at the court, who lives forth in the tradition as a great benefactor, *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 23. His example shows what was made possible at that time. In his liberality Khosrau built churches for Šīrin, BAR 'EBRĀĪ, *Chronicon syriacum*, p. 97, and made donations to the Christian institutions, THEOPHYLACTUS, *Historia*, V. 13, 14, p. 229 f.

<sup>4</sup> *ḥēnānā kēn mēdānānā wēlōn mēdānā i mōnā kēnāwēlōn*  
'during the teaching (ministry) of Ḥenānā, presbyter, skilful in his knowledge and glorious in his humility', *Statutes*, p. 80.

Nothing is reported of the action of his successor, Gabri'el bar Rūfinā. But his rule was short<sup>5</sup>.

When Grīgōr ascended to the orphaned seat, a new page was turned. The future of Ḥenānā and the School of Nisibis was sealed. The arrival of that man, famous for his thaumaturgic reputation and his evangelistic and paedagogical activity<sup>6</sup>, elevated to the metropolitan seat upon Khosrau's recommendation, whom he had also impressed, must have galvanized the adversaries of Ḥenānā into action. No doubt it also impressed those who in these contentions had been on the fence. Emboldened by this development, the opponents of Ḥenānā sought the support of the new metropolitan, an alumnus of the School of Nisibis, having studied under Abraham<sup>7</sup> and who had certainly followed the matter with increasing alarm when he was bishop of Kaškar.

This impending tremor merely intensified the magnitude of the earthquake which inexorably was approaching. For Grīgōr's entry in Nisibis must have taken place soon after the decree of 596 A.D. According to the testimony of Mīkā in the year 907 A.G., i.e. 596 A.D., Sabrišō', bishop of Lāšōm was consecrated catholicos, and Grīgōr was elevated to the dignity of the metropolitan at about the same time<sup>8</sup>, certainly by the newly elected patriarch<sup>9</sup>.

Such brief comments as we possess make it clear that Grīgōr was not miserly with reproaches and censures<sup>10</sup>. And when these measures did not work and Ḥenānā ignored the warnings, Grīgōr condemned his writings<sup>11</sup>. He also moved to secure the approval

<sup>5</sup> *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> See page 204.

<sup>7</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 507.

<sup>8</sup> ELIĀ BAR ŠINĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, p. 124.

<sup>9</sup> IŠŌ'DENAH, *Livre de la chasteté*, LVI, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> فلما صار جريغور مطرانا على نصيبين ذكر له اهل العلم ما فعله 'when Grīgōr became the metropolitan over Nisibis, scholars informed him about things that were heard about him; he reproved these things regarding him and he threatened him regarding his activity', *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 509<sup>7-8</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> 'but he did فلم يعدل عمل قاله. فحرم كتبه التي وضعها

not want to reexamine his contentions and he condemned his works that he had composed', *ibid.*, p. 509<sup>8</sup>.

of the catholicos. The stage was set for the showdown<sup>12</sup>. Apparently Grīgōr must have acted swiftly. The rapid steps he had taken made the situation appear very black to Henānā. According to the report, he is said to have concluded that he was cornered. If we may trust the Chronicle of Seert, he felt that he had been maneuvered into a situation from which there was no other way but that of retreat<sup>13</sup>. There seems to be no valid reason to doubt our source — it quite naturally describes Henānā's estimate of the situation — the ultimate consequences, coming first to mind, are so recorded.

We may therefore trust the same source when it says that Henānā, after an interval, regained his composure. This is psychologically understandable. The remnants in our sources can be pieced together to reconstruct the situation. He soon saw that he was not alone in his hour of trial. He had won friends. And some of them very influential. Former pupils rallied to his side — they were his supporters among the clergy and the teachers. It seems that he also found support among the civic dignitaries in Nisibis<sup>14</sup>. No wonder Henānā changed his mind.

Recovering quickly, he plotted his counter-action. He wrote to Catholicos Sabrišō', defending himself vigorously<sup>15</sup>. His defence was cast in a way that irritated the fathers to proceed to excommunicate him.

But just when things were moving along the course calculated by Grīgōr and his aides, an obstruction emerged. The catholicos

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 509.

<sup>13</sup> فا ظهر الوجوع عما انكر عليه واقام زماناً على ذلك حتى  
'he simulated the response as though to renounce it (i.e. his activity), and for a while continued in this manner until he found a way to ask for assistance from the physicians of the king', *ibid.*, p. 509a-9.

<sup>14</sup> It seems that the Chronicle of Seert means influential persons in Nisibis, *ibid.*, p. 511<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> وانفذ ايضا حنانا الى سبريشوع كتاباً يخدعه فيه بما ضمنه  
'and also Henānā sent a letter to Sabrišō' in which he outwitted him just as the false prophet has done to the true prophet', *ibid.*, p. 5102-3.

refused to give his consent. Nor did he yield to the pressure by the bishops who had lined up with Metropolitan Grīgōr. The very man who at the beginning of his office had unequivocally expressed himself against Ḥenānā and his adherents had now changed his mind.

Why? The reasons are not elusive to detection. We have made no reference so far to a factor which appears to have been the most decisive. What an asset it was for Ḥenānā and his lieutenants. This was the constellation of power politics — its center was not the office of the patriarch but the royal court. The physicians who belonged to this 'establishment', were Gabri'el of Šiggar<sup>16</sup> whose position in the eyes of the king was immense<sup>17</sup>, and his second Mār Abā<sup>18</sup>. In this place their ear was quickly bent to the request for help especially since the metropolitan of Nisibis had irritated and gravely hurt Gabri'el in action on certain delicate matters<sup>19</sup>. Grīgōr had thus prepared his own trap in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. His helpless wrath breaks out in Bābai's report, full of anger that 'the medical science at the court' had taken sides with Ḥenānā and his company<sup>20</sup>. This factor tilted the scales in favor of Ḥenānā and upset the carefully prepared strategy of his enemies. Of course, all this was clear to Sabrišō'. Whatever else he may have thought, he felt it expedient not to pursue his previous course. The consequences risked were too grave.

Having been successful in agitation and other activities, Grīgōr had run against a stone wall. We cannot expect any candid report about such a painful affair in the life of this valiant protagonist of orthodoxy. Īšō'denaḥ's version blaming the people of Nisibis for Grīgōr's departure by night, so different from his entry, is sheer fabrication<sup>21</sup>. The Chronicle of Seert which depicts this drama in touching colors, how he cleansed the dust from his feet at the

<sup>16</sup> He is called ܓܒܪܝܐܠ ܕܫܝܓܐܪ 'Gabri'el drōstbed' in *Synodicon orientale*, p. 562s. The title *drōstbed* 'master of soundness' corresponds to the Greek ἀρχίατρος.

<sup>17</sup> A successful cure of the sterile Queen Širīn and the birth of Merdānšāh, secured him immense authority at the court, *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 524.

<sup>19</sup> Grīgōr had excommunicated him because of bigamy, *ibid.*, p. 510.

<sup>20</sup> *Taš'itā de-Mār Giwargis*, p. 505 f.

<sup>21</sup> He tells that Grīgōr had to leave the city because he had shown compassion and mercy towards Ḥenānā, and the inhabitants revolted against him so that because of his goodness and kindness he had to suffer, *Livre de la chasteté*, LVI, p. 35.

city gate and left Nisibis protesting, is no better<sup>22</sup>. This ennobled portrait of a prelate who suffered such injustice scarcely corresponds to the factual situation. The picture of this champion of orthodoxy has been retouched. These accounts rule themselves inadmissible in the court of criticism. An ancient source contains significant remarks to the effect that Grīgōr had done a great deal to make adversaries and to create bitterness against him<sup>23</sup>. Besides this he had the misfortune of having to take radical steps to purge disorder. Thereby new enemies were made among the clergy and the lay people<sup>24</sup>. His measures against the dissidents<sup>25</sup> acquaints us somewhat with his interest. By these and other precipitous actions, this zealous prelate had stirred up bitter sentiments and hostility<sup>26</sup>.

What Sabrišō' foresaw soon happened. Khosrau ordered Grīgōr to leave and live in the Monastery of Šahdōst<sup>27</sup>. Later he was ordered to live in his homeland<sup>28</sup>. He spent the rest of his life in missionary, paedagogical and literary activity<sup>29</sup>. How long he was engaged in these activities is not known<sup>30</sup>.

But Henānā, too, had to pay a very heavy price. This affair clearly shows what in the heat of the controversy and struggle

<sup>22</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 510.

<sup>23</sup> This source tells us that he was eager to use disciplinary means to correct the clerics 'corrupted in their conduct' along with the rest of the believers. He must have used these means so excessively that they refused to obey him, *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 18<sup>9-11</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> He also had vexed the monastic communities around the mountain of Šiggar and expelled them from their residences; his pretext was that they were the *meṣaliānē*, *ibid.*, p. 18. We have every reason to suspect that they were monks with Monophysite inclinations branded freely as the *meṣaliānē*.

<sup>26</sup> ܡܠܟܐ ܕܢܝܨܝܒܝܫ ܕܢܝܨܝܒܝܫ ܕܢܝܨܝܒܝܫ ܕܢܝܨܝܒܝܫ 'since then the accusations of the Nisibians and of the outsiders accumulated against him', *ibid.*, p. 18<sup>16-17</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> He lived in solitude in the wilderness between Niffar and Kaškar, *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 512.

<sup>29</sup> See page 204.

<sup>30</sup> A note made by Bābai claims that Grīgōr's exile lasted for 17 years, *Taš'ulā de-Mār Giwargis*, p. 428. According to the Chronicle of Seert Grīgōr died in the 22nd year of Khosrau, i.e. 611-12, *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 513. Thus his departure from Nisibis would fall on the year 594-95. This, however is not possible since at that time Sabrišō' was not yet on the catholicos' seat. One of these sources must be mistaken.

Ḥenānā actually thought of the fate of the School of Nisibis and the condition of the church at large. The assistance from the physicians at the court in Seleucia-Ctesiphon was, indeed, a gift of the Danaeans! It did a disservice to Ḥenānā, his cohorts and the School of Nisibis. One aggravating factor had not been taken into account in this game. It had belonged to the agenda of ecclesiastical affairs, having a longer history. But at that time it had become particularly painful. Since Parvez had taken over the rule as Khosrau II in 590 A.D., the Nestorian church found itself in a difficult situation. The Monophysite movement seized the moment to become aggressive, seeking sympathy and support from the royal court, thanks to the attitude of Širīn, the queen — a convert from the Nestorian to the Monophysite creed — and the activities of the physicians. Also Gabri'el had returned to the Monophysite fold<sup>31</sup>. That Ḥenānā, the head of this most important center of learning rejoiced with the delighted benefactors of the Monophysite cause and the insurgent Jacobite church must have poured bile upon bitter gall.

## 12. EXODUS

Those who rejoiced over the unpleasant departure of Grīgōr could hardly have imagined what was in store for them. Their joy was of short duration. The fiasco of the operations led by Grīgōr did not smash the opposition. New and more successful ways and methods were being sought. And a very effective one was found. It was the last resort — the strategy of inner revolution. It was an action that was to paralyze the work, and mark the end of the period of glory of the School of Nisibis.

The unhappiest chapter in the history of the School of Nisibis is recorded by the Chronicle of Seert. 'Amr has but a brief reference<sup>1</sup>. We cannot expect to hear how this plan was organized or by whom this work of subversion was inspired and carried out.

<sup>31</sup> He is reported to have been a Monophysite who entered the Nestorian church to evade difficulties in his marriage affair; after having difficulties with the Nestorian ecclesiastical authorities about his new marriage, he returned to the Jacobite fold, *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 19.

<sup>1</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 52.

We are allowed to see only that phase which was prepared for the public. As the curtain goes up, we see the community of the School of Nisibis ready for the dramatic act : 'They departed from the school, and distributed their belongings; they took with them the gospels and the crosses in black veils, and the censers; they departed from the town with prayers and chanting the hymns of supplications; they were about 300 souls; the inhabitants of the town wept, and sighed about their exodus while the shameless chiefs rejoiced that they had chased out Grīgōr' <sup>2</sup>.

At the gate of the city, the community of this famous center of learning was assembled for the last time : 'When these departing ones arrived at the gate of the town, they completed the prayer and after having said farewell to one another, they separated from each other' <sup>3</sup>.

This procession included most of the teachers. The most eminent are mentioned by name : Īšō'iahb of Gedālā, Ḥadbešabbā 'Arbāiā, Īšō'iahb of Ḥadiab, Paulos, Mika'el the doctor along with other doctors <sup>4</sup>.

The date 582 A.D. suggested for this exodus <sup>5</sup> is certainly wrong. Scher has suggested the year 589 A.D., thinking that the promulgation of the new statutes must have been connected with the effects of this crisis <sup>6</sup>. This does not stand up under critical ana-

وخرجوا عن الاسكول وفرقوا قماشهم واخذوا معهم اناجيل وصلباناً <sup>2</sup>  
 في مقلان اسود وفيارم وخرجوا عن المدينة بالصلاة يقولون عناني  
 الباعوث وكانوا نحو ثلثمائة نفس. واهل المدينة ينوحون ويبكون على  
 خروجهم. وروساوها الاشقياء يفرحون بطردهم جريغور  
*Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 510<sup>8</sup>-511<sup>2</sup>.

فلما بلغ الخارجون باب المدينة ختموا الصلاة وودع بعضهم بعضاً <sup>3</sup>  
 وتفرقوا *ibid.*, p. 511<sup>5-6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 511 f.

<sup>5</sup> A note in a manuscript found by Scher, cf. *PO*, VII, p. 10, footnote 1.

<sup>6</sup> 'A dater de cette époque l'École commenca à baisser. Les règlements n'étaient pas propres à assurer le bon ordre', ni les étudiants à suivre les statuts. Pour prévenir l'augmentation du mal, Ḥnana établit de nouveaux règlements (590)...', *ibid.*, p. 10.

lysis. In these calculations we must face the important fact. However terse our sources are, all agree that the revolt took place under the pontificate of Sabrīšō'. This is so in the *Chronicle of Seert*. The picture in 'Amr<sup>7</sup> is unsatisfactory but in this question there is no doubt that the author had the period after Sabrīšō's enthronisation in mind. We do not have any positive indication enabling us to pin down the time more closely. Considerations of a general nature, namely, reckoning with the realistic calculation that revenge on behalf of Grīgōr against Ĥenānā and his adherents was not long delayed, make it possible to argue that the exodus must have taken place not long after Grīgōr's downfall.

Up to the time of this catastrophe, the School of Nisibis had functioned as the heart of spiritual life in East Syrian Christianity. As such it had continued to exercise a profound influence upon the spiritual and intellectual culture. In this respect it had no rival. The procession just depicted dramatizes the last act of an institution of unique position which has written the most beautiful pages in the history of Iranian Christianity.

It remains for us to assess the contribution of the institution, which had accumulated so much spiritual life, in its darkest hour of existence. We now turn to the evidence furnished by the *Chronicle of Seert*. In fact, this source puts us in its debt, having saved a piece of information taken from one of the works about the schools which has not survived. Regardless of the fact that we cannot be quite happy about it owing to its brevity, the truth is that it is irreplaceable.

Every element in this unique report is invaluable. For it indicates the bearing of this exodus upon other schools. This paragraph opens with the statement: 'One part of them went to the Monastery of Mār Abraham'<sup>8</sup>. This monastery on the Īzlā Mount in the vicinity of Nisibis — a famous center of reform monasticism — was certainly magnetic enough to attract some of the strength of the community of students and teachers. This was especially true because of a greater emphasis upon studies when

<sup>7</sup> *De patriarchis*, p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> فيعض مضى الى عمر مار ابراهيم *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 511g-7.



That is as far as we can get at the moment. These were the principal places that profited from the exodus. Certainly others not now identifiable received stimuli.

The information we have gathered prompts us to conclude that the impact of the exodus was manifold. A new school was established at Bālād. A number of schools received additional strength and stimuli through teachers as well as students. The schools considered potential rivals — particularly the School of Seleucia-Ctesiphon — began to move toward grand futures.

### 13. THE SCHOOL OF NISIBIS DURING THE LAST PART OF ẖENĀNĀ'S LIFE

The exodus is reported to have left very few students in the school, about 20 persons<sup>1</sup>. Since we must rely upon the judgement of ẖenānā's adversaries, from whom we hardly can expect objectivity, this number must be taken seriously. But even these say that some teachers stood by their director in this hour of trial.

Aḥā was one of these<sup>2</sup>. No information can be unearthed about him. Iṣāfiā of Taḥal is listed next<sup>3</sup>. We are told that his literary work brought him under fire. That his writings irritated the champions of orthodoxy is clear<sup>4</sup>.

Another teacher who remained was Meskēnā 'Arbāiā<sup>5</sup>. His literary productivity brought him into the same trouble as his colleague<sup>6</sup>. A remark that Meskēnā was for a while in the school in Bālād also emerges<sup>7</sup>. It is not clear whether this refers to previous work in a school in Bālād, or whether, having left the School of Nisibis later, he joined the new school founded near Bālād. The first possibility is more probable.

In any case even the little we have about the conditions in the School of Nisibis after the exodus, reveals its new status. Whatever the actual numbers, its size was drastically reduced. It also had lost most of its teachers. It had to be content with a dubious

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 511.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 511<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 511<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>4</sup> See page 276 f.

<sup>5</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 511<sub>5</sub>.

<sup>6</sup> See page 277.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.





We are left with few possibilities of assistance in our considerations regarding the approximate date of Ḥenānā's death. One possibility comes up in connection with the situation in the church after the death of Catholicos Grīgōr. At that time, Ḥenānā must still have been alive, since an action, in which Ḥenānā whether voluntarily or not was involved, was undertaken. Apparently there were plans to make Ḥenānā or one of his friends the successor of the deceased catholicos, a possibility that would naturally have caused much excitement and furor in the church. This we know from several texts. Bābai says that the king gave an assignment to Gabri'ēl at the court to suggest a suitable person for the vacant catholicos' seat : 'For this theopaschitic man of Šiggar went and

<sup>17</sup> *අපි සහ අනෙකුත් සම සතු, තවද නිවැරදි වශයෙන්* *ibid.*, p. 478.



<sup>30</sup> An echo of these undulations seems to appear in the synodical canons established under Catholicos Jōḥannān bar Abgārē about the year 900, 'Aḅḏīšō', *Nomocanon*, V, 22, p. 255.

## EPILOGUE

After this excursion which in many respects proved to be very rewarding, since it enabled us to illuminate several aspects of the rôle and significance of the center of learning in Nisibis, it remains to say at least a few words before we leave the subject. It was possible to subject the era which saw the formation and élan of the School of Nisibis, to close analysis. Now, before we close our investigation, some explanation must be given concerning the epoch which superseded it.

The period that followed the death of Ḥenānā is far less accessible than the history which has been the subject of our excursion. There are several reasons for this, and an examination of these causes serves to characterize also the later centuries in the history of the school.

The first reason is to be sought in the quality of the school's leadership. The subsequent history of the school did not produce any really eminent person at the helm of the school. When we inspect the succession of these persons we find no one who has left his mark on the history of the school, or was able to revitalize the school to such an extent that it could have regained its former position of preeminence even for a relatively short period. As far as it is possible to ascertain such vigorous and dynamic personalities do not appear among the successors of Narsai, Abraham, Jōḥannān de-Bêt Rabban and Ḥenānā. This state of affairs is symptomatic.

Even when we lower our standards of leadership requirements not much more can be said on the subject. In fact, in the light which our sources can give only one man stands out among others — Sūrīn, and he stands close to the period we have investigated. He was the head of the School of Nisibis in the second quarter of the seventh century <sup>1</sup> — whether he immediately succeeded Ḥenānā <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assemani identified him wrongly with Catholicos Sūrīn, *Bibliotheca orient.*, II, 1, p. 168. After Abā II he was in 754 appointed catholicos by the Islamic authorities, MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> We are told that he was a *mepašqānā* at the time when the successor

must remain an open question. But looking over the generations that followed we cannot find another person who in achievements and reputation is comparable to such heads of other schools as Abraham bar Dāšandād of Bēt Šaiiādē<sup>3</sup>, director of the School of Bāšōš in Sapsāpā<sup>4</sup>, or Gabri'el of Bēt Qaṭrāiē<sup>5</sup>, director of the School of Seleucia<sup>6</sup>, or Īšō' bar Nūn<sup>7</sup>, the head of the School of Seleucia<sup>8</sup>, or Emmanu'el bar Šahārē<sup>9</sup>, *mepašqānā* of the School of Mār Gabri'el in the Upper Monastery at Mošūl<sup>10</sup>.

What has just been said about the leadership in the direction and administration of the school applies also to the excellence of the teaching staff. To be sure the school must from time to time have had at least some teachers on its staff who were regarded as more outstanding because of their literary activity, knowledge and unusual gifts of instruction and who therefore were able to bring some reputation to the institution. Our sources remain silent about them however. We must be cautious when it comes to making postulations.

Sūrīn seems to have remained as such a teacher for an extended period. He was remembered as an eminent one. His literary work must have attracted particular attention. His anti-heretical work was in the style of the Greek diatribe — so it was remembered<sup>11</sup>. His *mēmnrā* on the directors of the School of Nisibis<sup>12</sup> was sometimes included in the liturgical tradition<sup>13</sup>, and a compendium of

of Bābai Rabā, Rabban Narsai, ruled over the Monastery of Īzlā, and the successor of Bābai bar Nišibnāiā, Rabban Gabri'el, over the monastery established by him, Jāusep Ḥazzāiā, in Ms. Bagd. 191, fol. 81 a.

<sup>3</sup> THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, III, 3, p. 145 ff.; cf. MARI, *De patriarchis*, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> About his writings see 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, CXXVI, p. 194.

<sup>5</sup> See a historical note in *Studia syriaca*, I, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> About his works see 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, CI, p. 172 f.

<sup>7</sup> ELIĀ BAR ŠĪNĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, I, p. 59.

<sup>8</sup> About his literary work see 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, LXXXIX, p. 165 f.

<sup>9</sup> Ms. Alqōš 33, fol. 1 a.

<sup>10</sup> About his writings see 'ABDĪŠŌ', *Catalogus librorum*, CLXXXVII, p. 277.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, XCII, p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> A portion edited in SŪRĪN, *Mēmnrā de-abāhātā*, p. 400.

<sup>13</sup> Ms. Diyarb. 70.

theology reckons also with his work<sup>14</sup>. He seems to have worked in still another field<sup>15</sup> and we regret all the more that we have no way of knowing what is behind the brief remark that he also wrote 'demonstrations and disputations (or inquiries)'<sup>16</sup>.

Thus, the truth is that there were no powerful individual figures, no happy combinations of teams of teachers, who could by their activities bring such renown to the school that it could again have occupied the leading position. There were no men who could have attracted students with such compelling force as others had done formerly and no one was able to create a student body comparable even remotely to the past size of the community.

The situation is brighter with respect to the literary creation — another main artery through which pulsated the life of this center of learning.

The great examples which the school had produced during the first generations of its existence were too powerful not to serve as effective stimuli for later generations. In fact this vitality that lived in the literary field in the institution managed to remain most powerful even in the subsequent period of decline. To a certain degree these traditions still continued to captivate the minds. At least in some areas there was a considerable afterglow from the period of floration. Evidence of this is found in the works of several outstanding men.

The strongest stimuli continued to be felt in the field of historiography — an area which had begun to be explored later than other disciplines but which showed steady growth. In fact, the stimuli exerted in this field proved to be fruitful in several directions.

On the subject of the history of martyrs at least one work is known. This subject found an exponent in Gabri'el, named Tauretā, of Šīrzōr or Šiārzōr, who devoted his work to the martyrs of Ṭūr Berain<sup>17</sup>.

Particular interest has been devoted to the monastico-historical areas of study. Along these lines there are several outstanding

<sup>14</sup> Ms. Berl. orient. fol. 1201, fol. 92 b.

<sup>15</sup> Ishāq Šebadnāiā in his exegetical work quotes him, Ms. Bagd. 6024, cah. 16, fol. 6 b; Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9358, fol. 91 b.

<sup>16</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ, *Catalogus librorum*, XCII, p. 169.

<sup>17</sup> THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, II, 18, p. 92.

works. The history of monasticism composed by Sahdōnā of Halmōn<sup>18</sup> in Bēt Nūhadrā who is characterized as 'a mighty man among those who compose books'<sup>19</sup>, seems to have been a rather extensive treatise<sup>20</sup>.

The greatest achievement in this area, however, was accomplished by 'Enānišō' of Ḥadiab, a luminary who was a monk in the Monastery of Īzlā and settled down in the Monastery of Bēt 'Ābē. He is credited with the codification of the monastico-historical<sup>21</sup> and ascetic-philosophical<sup>22</sup> literature of Egyptian provenance, having been appointed by Catholicos Gīwargīs I<sup>23</sup> to pursue this task. This work comprises a huge amount of material<sup>24</sup> which embraces narratives<sup>25</sup> as well as the ascetic wisdom treasured in the Apophthegmata<sup>26</sup>.

Historiography has prospered also in some other areas besides the monastico-historical. The biographies of eminent ascetics, monks and saints deserve special mention. Among the authors engaged in this enterprise we see in the forefront Sahdōnā<sup>27</sup> and Gabri'el<sup>28</sup>. Gabri'el was credited also with the creation of other narratives<sup>29</sup> which seem to be hagiographical in nature as well.

The school was much less effective in providing stimuli for studies in other areas. What was produced in the field of theology bears evidence of the vexations in the doctrinal realm which the School

<sup>18</sup> Also Bar Sahdē, or with the Greek name Mār Ṭūrīs or Martyrios.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 34, p. 62.

<sup>20</sup> 'The triumphs of the ascetics who lived in the country of the Orient', *ibid.*, I, 34, p. 62.

<sup>21</sup> *Book of Paradise*, p. 1 ff.; *Paradisus patrum*, p. 1 ff.

<sup>22</sup> *Book of Paradise*, p. 432 ff.; *Paradisus patrum*, p. 442 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Ruled from about 660 till 680/1.

<sup>24</sup> In more than 1000 chapters!

<sup>25</sup> This includes the *Historia Lausiaca* by Palladios, the corpus of narratives ascribed to Palladios, and the *Historia monachorum* connected with the name of Hieronymus.

<sup>26</sup> This constitutes the third part of the corpus.

<sup>27</sup> Biography of Rabban Ja'qōb of Bēt 'Ābē, abbot of the community, THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, I, 24, p. 47; cf. I, 34, p. 62.

<sup>28</sup> Biography of Rabban Narsai, former abbot of the Īzlā Monastery, *ibid.*, II, 18, p. 91.

<sup>29</sup> Narratives of various kinds, as Thomas calls this part of his literary work, *ibid.*, II, 18, p. 92.

of Nisibis itself had helped to increase through the work of its last great director. The most outstanding contributions came from Sahdōnā, and they were made in the area of christology<sup>30</sup>. It seems that he produced several works<sup>31</sup>. However they tore open wounds<sup>32</sup> which had not yet healed in the church. The specter of Ḥenānā continued to haunt the doctrinal dispute of the church, doing damage to the reputation of the school. Conflict flared up over his christology<sup>33</sup> and even led to serious complications. The conflict rapidly developed into a strife between the rival parties<sup>34</sup> and it ended with the expulsion of Sahdōnā under Catholicos Māremmeh<sup>35</sup>. By a synodical decision<sup>36</sup> he was deposed from his episcopal position<sup>37</sup>, his writings were condemned<sup>38</sup> and their reading forbidden<sup>39</sup>.

Stimulated by the ongoing controversy that raged between the ardent defenders of orthodoxy and the Jacobites who had their stronghold in the Monastery of Qarṭāmīn Gabri'el emerged as an active promoter of polemical theology<sup>40</sup>. The case of Sahdōnā poured added oil on the flames.

<sup>30</sup> Two books written against the Nestorian faith, Ṭṣō'DENAḤ, *Livre de la chasteté*, CXXVIII, p. 69.

<sup>31</sup> THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, II, 6, p. 73 speaks of several books on this explosive subject.

<sup>32</sup> See page 299 ff.

<sup>33</sup> DE HALLEUX, *La christologie de Martyrios-Sahdona*, p. 7 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Depending on the success of the machinations of either the one or the other party, Sahdōnā was alternately expelled from and received into the Nestorian fold. In the meantime Sahdōnā even temporarily held the position of bishop of the Chalcedonian church in Edessa. After this he was reinstated as bishop of Māḥōzē since Bishop Mār Sabā, to whom Sahdōnā's bishopric had been given, had died, Ṭṣō'DENAḤ, *Livre de la chasteté*, CXXVII, p. 68. See particularly Ṭṣō'IAHB III, *Liber epistularum*, XXX, p. 209 f.

<sup>35</sup> I.e. between 647 and 650, the period of Māremmeh's rule. Definitively he was thrown out by Ṭṣō'iahb III when he became catholicos in 650, ABRAHAM OF ZĀBĒ, *History of Rabban Bar 'Edta*, XXIV, p. 156; THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, II, 6, p. 73. See also some allusions in Ṭṣō'IAHB, *Liber epistularum*, p. 230 f. Cf. also DE HALLEUX, *Martyrios-Sahdona*, p. 93 ff.

<sup>36</sup> The synod took place in Karkā de-Geddān, *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 636.

<sup>37</sup> At that time he was bishop of Māḥōzē de-Arēwān in Bēt Garmai.

<sup>38</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, XIII, p. 636.

<sup>39</sup> Ṭṣō'IAHB, *Liber epistularum*, XXX, p. 208 f.

<sup>40</sup> Ms. Vat. syr. 457, fol. 352 ff., a work against the heretics.

The works dealing with ethics concern themselves with the monastic ideal of life. We have an extensive work on asceticism<sup>41</sup> and other writings on similar subjects<sup>42</sup>, produced by Sahdōnā but there is nothing comparable to the legacy left by Sahdōnā.

The area of liturgy also was cultivated as is evident from various studies such as the *mēmre* among which those of Gabri'el deserve mention<sup>43</sup>. Other studies appear in connection with the preparation of the new version of the *hūdrā* which was entrusted into the hands of 'Enānīšō'<sup>44</sup>.

Some energy was left over also for the cultivation of such areas as philology, particularly lexicography. Impulses initiated by Jāusep Hūzāiā were continued by 'Enānīšō' who appears in the company of celebrated grammarians<sup>45</sup>, whose interests are manifested by his works on homonyms (*aequilitterae*)<sup>46</sup> and difficult terms<sup>47</sup> in patristic literature<sup>48</sup> — an achievement which is reported to have surpassed all other works in accuracy<sup>49</sup>.

Much less material is in evidence in the sphere of philosophical studies. From the pen of 'Enānīšō' there is a modest cycle<sup>50</sup> consisting of definitions and commentaries on them<sup>51</sup> but otherwise there is nothing else which can be recorded.

<sup>41</sup> MARTYRIUS, *Quae sunt omnia*, p. 1 ff.; MARTYRIUS, *Œuvres spirituelles*, I-III.

<sup>42</sup> Letters and maxims in a complete edition in *Œuvres spirituelles*, IV.

<sup>43</sup> A *mēmre* on the celebration of the footwashing for Thursday in Holy Week, Ms. Diyarb. 70.

<sup>44</sup> 'Enānīšō' was appointed by Catholicos Īšō'iahb III to arrange the *hūdrā*, the service book for the whole ecclesiastical year, THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, II, 15, p. 87.

<sup>45</sup> Ms. Ming. syr. 508, fol. 3 b.

<sup>46</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ, *Catalogus librorum*, LXXV, p. 144. ELIĀ OF SŌBĀ, *Treatise of Syriac Grammar*, p. 61 ff.; *Opuscula nestoriana*, p. 2 ff. The treatise has been supplemented by a similar work composed by Ḥunain ibn Ishāq, Ms. Alqōš 290, fol. 1 a ff.; Ms. Alqōš 292, fol. 1 a ff.; Ms. Alqōš 325, fol. 1 a ff.; Ms. Ming. syr. 420, fol. 1 a ff.

<sup>47</sup> 'ABDĪŠŌ, *Catalogus librorum*, LXXV, p. 144.

<sup>48</sup> Ms. Alqōš 291, cah. 7, fol. 9 a ff.

<sup>49</sup> THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, II, 11, p. 80.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 11, p. 80.

<sup>51</sup> There is a double collection in the Jacobite tradition in Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,154, fol. 191 a ff.

However, our brief survey serves still another useful purpose. It helps us to realize that something did happen even in this sector — the vigor of creative life had lost much of its dynamics. A graphic illustration is provided by the situation in such a vital area as biblical exegesis. It is true that really nothing has been produced here which deserves to be compared with the creative products coming from the period of *élan*<sup>52</sup>. The fact is that there is nothing reported of the contributions in this field. The teachers of later generations still rested on the achievements produced previously, looking back to the earlier epoch as the classical period of biblical scholarship. They were satisfied to play the rôle of eclectic compilers.

Thus, during the subsequent generations the School of Nisibis did not show any evidence of the kind of literary life which could have mustered enough strength and power to rejuvenate the forces operating in this center of learning.

Stagnation is evident also from another symptom. As we have already seen, several historically important movements originated in the School of Nisibis. In fact, this center became a hotbed for the germination of various stimuli which made an impact on the entire church in a very tangible and unusual way. Nothing of this kind of new life can be ascertained on the basis of any records at our disposal. What is reported does not go beyond the limit of modesty<sup>53</sup>. No historically noteworthy actions or movements, important for the fertilization of the vital areas of church life which emanated from the School of Nisibis during the later centuries can be reported.

In order to understand this situation other factors in the history of East Syrian educational institutions must be taken into account.

<sup>52</sup> See page 139 ff., 163 ff., 171 f., 179 ff., 213 ff., 238 ff.

<sup>53</sup> Only occasionally do we hear of some alumnus who is remembered for founding a monastic community. Among such individuals are Eliā of Ḥirtā, who seems to be identical with the founder of a monastery at the Tigris near Hesnā 'Ebrāiā, *Chronicon anonymum*, p. 23 f., cf. also THOMAS, *Historia monastica*, I, 9, p. 28, and Jōhannān of Ḥirtā whose fame is that he erected the Monastery of Me'arē de-Mār Jōhannān the Arab, IŠO'DENAH, *Livre de la chasteté*, XLVI, p. 28. There is, however, not a single person among the alumni who could be compared to the celebrated alumni of the past.

We have already seen how tragic circumstances had led to a development which affected the affairs of the school in such a way that rivals could arise at the expense of the School of Nisibis<sup>54</sup>. As time passed these rivals continued in ascendancy, announcing the arrival of a new period in the history of educational institutions among the Eastern Syrians. The most important among the contestants was the School in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. This school became the first serious rival and its fortunes improved steadily. In the 6th and 7th centuries it seems to have reached its period of floriation. After a relapse it was reestablished<sup>55</sup> by Catholicos Petiōn<sup>56</sup> and seems to have received some new vigor.

If this was already a serious threat to the position of the School of Nisibis and its future prospects, the situation became even more precarious after the foundation of another new school — this one in Baghdad<sup>57</sup>. Its location in the capital gave the new institution a great advantage. This school was founded under Catholicos Sabrišo' II<sup>58</sup>. The new rival emerged at a time when the general decline in education and schooling began to make itself felt. That this trend caused serious concern becomes evident from the voices which lament the neglect of studies and emphasize the need for establishing regulations designed to stem this tide<sup>59</sup>.

Besides these two rivals there were some other schools<sup>60</sup> which for shorter or longer periods had the good fortune to have eminent teachers whose fame became a magnet attracting students and so providing their schools with enviable renown. Thus with the passing of the centuries the whole atmosphere in the educational realm was changed by the emergence of new foci of study and learning in the East Syrian Christianity.

<sup>54</sup> See page 299 ff.

<sup>55</sup> 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 61.

<sup>56</sup> According to 'Amr he was catholicos from 731 till 741, according to Išo'denah̄ he died in 123 H = 731/2, ELIĀ BAR ŠINĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, I, p. 56, and according to Eliā the year of his death was 122 H = 730/1, *ibid.*, p. 56, 168.

<sup>57</sup> 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 70.

<sup>58</sup> He ruled from 831 till 835 according to ELIĀ BAR ŠINĀIĀ, *Opus chronologicum*, I, p. 60, but from 835 till 839 according to 'AMR, *De patriarchis*, p. 69 f.

<sup>59</sup> 'ABDIŠO', *Nomocanon*, VI, 3.

<sup>60</sup> See page 319.

This historical setting constituted the perspectives for the future developments of the School of Nisibis.

In view of these developments the School of Nisibis in the later period of its history had to become reconciled to the fact that it could not be more than one among other more outstanding educational institutions. This realization left an imprint on the life and work of the school — now it began to take its place in a network composed of a number of higher schools. The school resigned itself to the fact that the time of its pre-eminence and the uniqueness of its responsibilities and obligations had passed, and passed for ever. The future life and work of the school bear clearly the marks of these changed circumstances.

# QUOTED MANUSCRIPTS

ALEPPO		Ms. Bagd. 112	70 <sup>6</sup> , 163 <sup>33</sup> , 164 <sup>41-43</sup>
		Ms. Bagd. 113	70 <sup>8</sup> , 142 <sup>23</sup> , 214 <sup>23</sup> , 239 <sup>14-20</sup>
Ms. Mar Giorgi	27 <sup>15</sup>	Ms. Bagdad. 125	266 <sup>8</sup>
ALQOŠ		Ms. Bagd. 180	87 <sup>144</sup> , 143 <sup>33</sup> , 174 <sup>138</sup>
		Ms. Bagd. 191	319 <sup>2</sup>
		Ms. Bagd. 214	164 <sup>48</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 33	319 <sup>9</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 215	293 <sup>40</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 34	70 <sup>6</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 406	85 <sup>132</sup> , 159 <sup>24</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 44	19 <sup>36</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 513	255 <sup>48</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 49	70 <sup>7</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 522	17 <sup>22</sup> , 20 <sup>41</sup> , 21 <sup>45,47</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 51	20 <sup>39,40</sup>		102 <sup>17</sup> , 160 <sup>4</sup> , 162 <sup>9</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 52	20 <sup>39,40</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 601	72 <sup>18</sup> , 74 <sup>41</sup> , 75 <sup>44,46,47,55</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 53	20 <sup>39,41</sup> , 17 <sup>119</sup>		76 <sup>57,59</sup> , 78 <sup>71,72,74</sup> , 79 <sup>81</sup> , 84 <sup>118</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 54	21 <sup>45</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 602	72 <sup>18</sup> , 74 <sup>44</sup> , 75 <sup>46,55</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 55	21 <sup>45</sup>		76 <sup>57,59</sup> , 78 <sup>71,72,74</sup> , 88 <sup>148,150</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 65	279 <sup>29-31</sup> , 295 <sup>63</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 603	72 <sup>18</sup> , 73 <sup>21,27</sup> , 74 <sup>35,38</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 92	298 <sup>91,92</sup>		75 <sup>44,45,47</sup> , 77 <sup>65</sup> , 78 <sup>73,77</sup> , 79 <sup>81</sup> , 81 <sup>100</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 109	298 <sup>91</sup>		82 <sup>104,108</sup> , 84 <sup>118,123</sup> , 254 <sup>38</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 110	298 <sup>93</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 605	72 <sup>18</sup> , 73 <sup>26</sup> , 74 <sup>29,30,33,41</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 151	79 <sup>87</sup>		75 <sup>46,55,59</sup> , 76 <sup>57</sup> , 78 <sup>71,72,74</sup> , 87 <sup>148</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 155	174 <sup>145</sup> , 177 <sup>171</sup>		253 <sup>36</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 160	72 <sup>18</sup> , 74 <sup>41</sup> , 75 <sup>46,55</sup> ,	Ms. Bagd. 3119	79 <sup>83</sup>
	76 <sup>57,59</sup> , 78 <sup>71,72,74</sup> , 87 <sup>148</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 3120	79 <sup>83</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 161	72 <sup>18</sup> , 73 <sup>21,26,27</sup> , 74 <sup>29,30</sup> ,	Ms. Bagd. 3124	167 <sup>74</sup>
	33 <sup>38</sup> , 75 <sup>47,51</sup> , 78 <sup>73</sup> , 81 <sup>100</sup> , 82 <sup>104</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 6024	71 <sup>12,13</sup> , 141 <sup>17,18</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 174	85 <sup>132</sup>		164 <sup>40</sup> , 166 <sup>63</sup> , 173 <sup>132</sup> , 191 <sup>19</sup> , 214 <sup>25</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 176	298 <sup>96</sup>		215 <sup>31-33</sup> , 278 <sup>25</sup> , 320 <sup>15</sup>
Ms. Alquš 288	253 <sup>35</sup>	Ms. Bagd. 6033	291 <sup>17</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 290	323 <sup>46</sup>	Ms. Bagd. B	70 <sup>7</sup> , 164 <sup>47,50</sup> , 165 <sup>51-56</sup> ,
Ms. Alqōš 291	279 <sup>31</sup> , 323 <sup>48</sup>		166 <sup>61</sup> , 214 <sup>26</sup> , 240 <sup>22</sup> , 278 <sup>26</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 292	323 <sup>46</sup>	Ms. Bagd. C	278 <sup>17</sup> , 279 <sup>31</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 325	323 <sup>46</sup>	Ms. Bagd. D	293 <sup>32</sup>
Ms. Alqōš 326	86 <sup>135</sup>		

## 'AQRA

Ms. 'Aqra 52 79<sup>86</sup>

## BAGHDAD

Ms. Bagd. 36 168<sup>82,84</sup>

## BIRMINGHAM

Ms. Ming. syr. 25 87<sup>144</sup>, 174<sup>138</sup>

Ms. Ming. syr. 44 20<sup>39</sup>, 21<sup>45</sup>

Ms. Ming. syr. 47 167<sup>75</sup>, 296<sup>72</sup>

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Ms. Ming. syr. 57	71 <sup>13</sup> , 164 <sup>40</sup> , 173 <sup>132</sup> , 278 <sup>18-25</sup>	Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. 7	87 <sup>144</sup> , 216 <sup>45</sup> , 266 <sup>10</sup>
Ms. Ming. syr. 58	140 <sup>12</sup> , 141 <sup>16</sup> , 211 <sup>3</sup> , 214 <sup>24</sup> , 240 <sup>21</sup> , 278 <sup>18-24</sup> , 281 <sup>48</sup> , 293 <sup>34-43</sup>	Ms. Jer. Gr. Patr. 10	20 <sup>37</sup> , 141 <sup>15</sup> 164 <sup>37-38</sup> , 214 <sup>15-17</sup> , 247 <sup>23</sup>
Ms. Ming. syr. 84	79 <sup>86</sup>	KERKŪK	
Ms. Ming. syr. 128	167 <sup>68</sup>		
Ms. Ming. syr. 195	104 <sup>31</sup> , 174 <sup>139</sup> , 143-145, 175 <sup>147-148-151</sup> , 177 <sup>171-173</sup>	Ms. Kerk. 8	70 <sup>6</sup>
Ms. Ming. syr. 420	323 <sup>46</sup>	Ms. Kerk. 45	176 <sup>162</sup> , 201 <sup>28</sup>
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Ms. Ming. syr. 508	323 <sup>45</sup>	LONDON	
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Ms. Ming. syr. 566	279 <sup>29</sup>	Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,154	323 <sup>51</sup>
Ms. Ming. syr. 571	166 <sup>62</sup>	Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,156	19 <sup>33</sup>
Ms. Ming. syr. 586	167 <sup>75</sup> , 296 <sup>72</sup>	Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,174	27 <sup>15</sup> , 68 <sup>14</sup> , 286 <sup>27</sup>
Ms. Ming. syr. 604	298 <sup>91</sup>	Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 12,178	197 <sup>6</sup>
Ms. Ming. syr. 606	20 <sup>39-41</sup> , 21 <sup>45</sup>	Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,460	197 <sup>5</sup> , 203 <sup>36</sup>
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DAMASCUS		Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,732	27 <sup>15</sup>
Ms. Dam. Patr. 9/8	98 <sup>14</sup>	Ms. Br. Mus. Add. 14,734	27 <sup>15</sup>
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73 <sup>21.26.27</sup> , 74 <sup>29.30.33.35.38</sup> , 75 <sup>46.51.55</sup> ,			
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Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9367	72 <sup>18</sup> , 73 <sup>27</sup> ,	Ms. Par. syr. 248	20 <sup>39.40</sup>
75 <sup>47</sup> , 78 <sup>73</sup> , 79 <sup>81</sup> , 18 <sup>100</sup> , 82 <sup>104.108</sup>		Ms. Par. syr. 283	298 <sup>91.92</sup>
Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9368	72 <sup>18</sup> , 75 <sup>46.55</sup>	Ms. Par. syr. 306	110 <sup>5</sup> , 270 <sup>10</sup>
76 <sup>57.59</sup> , 78 <sup>71.72.75</sup> , 87 <sup>148.150</sup>		Ms. Par. syr. 308	19 <sup>36</sup>
Ms. Br. Mus. orient. 9370	290 <sup>8</sup>	Ms. Par. syr. 310	168 <sup>82.84</sup>
Ms. Br. Mus. Rich. 7200	157 <sup>9-11</sup>	Ms. Par. syr. 315	143 <sup>28</sup>
		Ms. Par. syr. 375	101 <sup>10</sup>
India Office		ŠARFEH	
Ms. Ind. Off. 9	279 <sup>33</sup>		
Ms. Ind. Off. Loth 1050	289 <sup>1</sup>	Ms. Šarf. Patr. 28	19 <sup>11</sup>
MANCHESTER		Ms. Šarf. Patr. 80	125 <sup>8</sup> , 210 <sup>3</sup> ,
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Ms. Manch. Ryl. syr. 41	70 <sup>7</sup> , 164 <sup>47</sup> ,	Ms. Šarf. Patr. 247	103 <sup>18</sup>
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Ms. Manch. Ryl. syr. 59	3 <sup>11</sup>	SEERT	
MARBURG		Ms. Seert 21	70 <sup>6</sup>
		Ms. Seert 28	192 <sup>27</sup>
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Ms. Berl. orient. oct. 1070	298 <sup>91.92</sup>	Ms. Seert 76	79 <sup>87</sup>
Ms. Berl. orient. oct. 1132	279 <sup>31</sup>	Ms. Seert 82	177 <sup>171</sup> , 294 <sup>52</sup> , 296 <sup>65</sup>
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		Ms. Seert 88	17 <sup>21</sup> , 20 <sup>37</sup>
MARDIN		Ms. Seert 109	294 <sup>52</sup> , 295 <sup>62</sup>
Chaldean Church		Ms. Seert 121	141 <sup>17</sup>
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## APPENDIX

Since the manuscripts in the collection of the Chaldean patriarchate in Baghdad have been furnished with new signatures based on a different system and the collection has been supplemented with new codices it is necessary to give a synopsis of the signatures and a brief description of manuscripts which were hitherto unknown.

- Ms. Baghdad 36 = SCHER, *Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques conservés dans la bibliothèque du Patriarcat Chaldéen de Mossoul*, n° 36.
- Ms. Baghdad 112 = Scher, n° 2.
- Ms. Baghdad 113 = Scher, n° 3.
- Ms. Baghdad 125 = Scher, n° 14.
- Ms. Baghdad 180. A volume of collected *mēmre* and liturgical texts. Written in the 17th century.
- Ms. Baghdad 214 = Scher, n° 22.
- Ms. Baghdad 215 = Scher, n° 20.
- Ms. Baghdad 406 = Scher, n° 66.
- Ms. Baghdad 513. A collection of various patristic and theological works. According to fol. 204 the volume was written on Nisan 25, 1660 or 1661 (?).
- Ms. Baghdad 522 = Scher, n° 35.
- Ms. Baghdad 601 = Scher, n° 71.
- Ms. Baghdad 602. A volume of 253 folios which contains a collection of Narsai's *mēmre*, altogether 25 in number.
- Ms. Baghdad 603 = Scher, n° 70.
- Ms. Baghdad 605 = Scher, n° 69.
- Ms. Baghdad 3119. A collection of liturgical materials combined with patristic works. Written in the 13th or 14th century.
- Ms. Baghdad 3120. A collection of liturgical and patristic works. Written in the 15th or 16th century.
- Ms. Baghdad 3124 = Scher, n° 54.
- Ms. Baghdad 6024 = Scher, n° 88.
- Ms. Baghdad 6033 = Scher, n° 100.
- Ms. Baghdad B. The codex has no number. It contains the *Gannat būssūmē*, is mutilated lacking beginning and ending. It starts with qurra 7 and ends with qurra 46, fol. 7. It was written in the 18th century.
- Ms. Baghdad C. The codex has no number. Its beginning is lost. The volume contains a collection of works of various content. It was written in the 17th or 18th century, partly in a recent hand.
- Ms. Baghdad D. The codex has no number. The volume contains commentaries on the Psalter, in a recent hand.

# INDEX OF NAMES

a. = author; abb. = abbot; ap. = apostle; bp. = bishop; cath. = catholicos; cbp. = chorepiscopus; d. = deacon; dir. = director; emp. = emperor; mtr. = metropolitan; maph. = maphrian; mk. = monk; patr. = patriarch; phys. = physician; pr. = priest; prsb. = presbyter; rb. = *rabbaitā*; s. = student; scr. = scribe; t. = teacher.

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